

AMERICAN
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES
1790-1860

By

LESLIE WHITTAKER DUNLAP

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
in the Faculty of Political Science,
Columbia University*

MADISON, WISCONSIN

PRIVATELY PRINTED

1944

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Preface

ANY organization which devotes considerable attention to the history of the United States might be called an American historical society. Patriotic, pioneer, and memorial associations have been so designated. Nevertheless, the term is commonly used in a more limited sense. The William L. Clements Library of American History is not a historical society; neither is the American Philosophical Society. The former has no sustaining body of affiliated members, and the latter is concerned principally with non-historical pursuits. Also neither the Society of California Pioneers nor the New England Society of Charleston is a historical society although each has an interest in regional history. The western organization is primarily a fraternal association, and the southern society was organized for charitable purposes. The term American historical society may properly be restricted to associations of individuals organized primarily to collect, preserve, and make available the materials for the history of the United States or a section of it.

Before the Civil War a historical society was organized in every state east of Texas except Delaware. In addition there were societies in the District of Columbia and the territory of New Mexico. A sketch of each of the sixty-five institutions is included in the second part of this study. Many of the associations were short-lived, but about half are still active. A number made valuable collections of historical materials and published many documents and original papers. The character of the societies before 1861 and their contribution to our knowledge of American history are described in the pages which follow.

This essay was written under the direction of Professor Allan Nevins of Columbia University, and I owe much to his broad scholarship and great enthusiasm for the study of American history. A large part of my work was done during free time made possible by a grant-in-aid awarded by the Committee on Fellowships of the American Library Association, and I am indeed grateful for the opportunity provided thereby. The kindly interest of the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. F. L. D. Goodrich, Librarian of the College of the City of New York, has been a source of real pleasure to me. My investigation was conducted largely in The New York Public Library, the Columbia University Library, and in the libraries of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New York Historical Society, the American Antiquarian Society, the Maryland Historical Society, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and in each institution I received many privileges and courtesies which facilitated my research. My debt to my wife, Marie Neese Dunlap, who typed the manuscript and verified numerous references, is greater than I can easily repay.

LESLIE W. DUNLAP

Madison, Wisconsin

March, 1944

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American Historical Societies
1790-1860

Part One

I

The Need for Historical Societies

LEARNING, in its limited and appropriate sense, is not to be found in America," wrote Joseph Green Cogswell in an Edinburgh magazine in 1819.¹ In two anonymously published articles the young man, who had followed George Ticknor and Edward Everett to Göttingen, could find little to praise in American scholarship. In the entire country there was but one-thirteenth of the literary resources available in Paris. Literature and science could not be expected to flourish in the young republic because of the inadequate training of professional men and their preoccupation with practical affairs. A reviewer in the United States, whose discomfiture caused by the articles is quickly apparent, did not attempt to disprove Cogswell's presentation of facts; he could only reprove the author for "gratifying the spleen of foreign sciolists."²

Cogswell described American libraries as "pitiful," and a survey of the principal collections confirms his characterization. At the time of his writing, the largest library in the United States, that of Harvard College, had about 25,000 volumes, but two decades earlier it had only half that number. The collections of the other colleges established in the colonial period were much smaller; not one had more than 3,000 volumes in 1800.³ Other American libraries established in the eighteenth century include

¹"On the State of Learning in the United States of America," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, IV (March, 1819), 641.

²*The North American Review*, IX (September, 1819), 259.

³Louis Shores, *Origins of the American College Library, 1638-1800* (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1934), pp. 50-56.

the Library Company of Philadelphia (1731), the Redwood Library at Newport (1747), the Library Society of Charleston (1748), and the New York Society Library (1754). Of the four only one, the Philadelphia institution, contained more than five thousand volumes in 1800.⁴ The Library of Congress was founded in 1802, but it numbered only 3,000 volumes in 1814.

In contrast to the virtual non-existence of research libraries in the United States, Europe had numerous collections of materials important to scholars. Three Italian libraries, the Vatican, Ambrosian, and Laurentian, housed innumerable notable manuscripts and hundreds of thousands of rare books. In 1818 the collections of the largest French library were estimated at 800,000 volumes, and a second Parisian institution, the Mazarine Library, had about 90,000 printed volumes and 3,500 manuscripts. About the same date the Imperial Library at Vienna consisted of about 300,000 volumes, and the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg had about half that number. The Royal Library at Copenhagen contained more than 200,000 volumes in 1786, when the Royal Library at Berlin totaled about 150,000. Other important German collections included the royal libraries at Munich, Dresden, and Stuttgart, and the university library at Göttingen. The last, which was used by Cogswell himself, contained more than 200,000 volumes in 1812.⁵

The outstanding British collections were as distinguished as those on the Continent. The great British Museum, established in 1753 to house the old royal collection, the Harleian manuscripts, and the Cotton and Sloane libraries, was greatly augmented in 1823 by the accession of the library of George III, which numbered about 70,000 volumes. In 1819 the Bodleian

⁴Charles Jewett, . . . *A Report on the Public Libraries of the United States of America, January 1, 1850* (31st Congress, 1st Session, Senate Miscellaneous Document no. 120), pp 48-154, *passim*.

⁵Information, sometimes conflicting, about the size of the major Continental book collections in the early nineteenth century may be found in [William Clarke,] *Repertorium Bibliographicum* . . . (London: William Clarke, 1819), pp. xxxiii-xlviii; Edward Edwards, *Memoirs of Libraries* . . . (London: Trübner & Co., 1859), II, 243-555; and Arundell Esdaile, *National Libraries of the World* (London: Grafton & Co., 1934), pp. 69, 121-318.

Library at Oxford and the University Library at Cambridge contained about 160,000 and 90,000 volumes respectively. The foremost Scottish collection, that of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, contained approximately 30,000 volumes when David Hume became librarian in 1751, and the library of Trinity College, Dublin, the chief Irish collection, had about 36,000 books and 1,000 volumes of manuscripts in 1818.⁶

Even more pronounced was the disparity between the resources for historical scholarship in the Old World and the New. The historian in Europe in the last half of the eighteenth century also had access to special collections formed for his use by societies organized for that very purpose. On the other hand, seven years after Cogswell's papers appeared in *Blackwood's*, the editor of the *North American Review* wrote about the "scattered and loose condition" of the materials for a historian of the United States.⁷ However, Jared Sparks was not the first to notice these circumstances; two decades earlier the founders of the New York Historical Society had observed in grandiloquent language:

The paucity of materials, and the extreme difficulty of procuring such as relate to the first settlement and colonial transactions of this State, can be fully perceived by those only who have meditated on the design of erecting an historical monument of those events, and have calculated the nature and amount of their resources . . ."⁸

There were historical societies long before the Massachusetts Historical Society was organized in 1791. An unconvincing attempt to trace the origin of the institution to the mythological society of Argonauts has been made by Robert Seton. Not content with this bizarre performance, he characterized the gymnosophists of India, the magi of Persia, the star-gazers of Babylon and Chaldea, the Celtic druids, and the Egyptian hierarchs as "so many members of historical societies." Seton also named

⁶Clarke, *ibid.*, pp. 68, 111; and Edwards, *ibid.*, I, 415-474, *passim*, and II, 8, 57.

⁷"Materials for American History," *The North American Review*, XXIII (October, 1826), 276.

⁸*The Constitution and Bye-Laws of the New-York Historical Society* (New-York: Printed by T. & J. Swords), 1805, pp. 8-9.

Plato, Varro, and Tully as the founders of important historical associations and the Pontifical Society of Archæology at Rome as the oldest historical society in Europe.⁹ Other writers have found the origin of historical societies in the court of Charlemagne where the *Annales Regales* were written, and the order of St. Benedict in France from the ninth to the eighteenth century has been called "a genuine historical society."¹⁰

Better known is the work of the outstanding modern European societies. The oldest of these, the Society of Antiquaries of London, was established in 1572. The organization was dissolved by James I in 1604 but was revived in 1707 and is still active. The library of this organization was of sufficient importance in 1816 to justify the publication of catalogues of its printed books and manuscripts. The former is a volume of 260 pages and the latter contains about a third of that number. However, the venerability of the London association did not command universal respect in the first half of the nineteenth century, for one critic wrote that in no society were "apathy and mismanagement more conspicuous."¹¹

Historical societies were formed in many European countries during the eighteenth century.¹² The most important of the modern French historical societies, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, was formed in 1701, twenty-six years before the Real Academia de Buena Letras de Barcelona was organized. More important than the Barcelona society is the Real Academia de la Historia formed in Madrid in 1738. The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland first met in 1780 and received its charter in 1782. A half century later, although possessed of very limited funds, the Edinburgh society was characterized as "extremely zealous."¹³

⁹"The Origin of Historical Societies," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, 1884-86*, I (1887), 52-58.

¹⁰Camille Enlart, "The Historical Societies of France," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1909*, 1911, p. 259.

¹¹Nicholas Nicolas, *Observations on the State of Historical Literature . . .* (London: William Pickering, 1830), p. 31.

¹²Historical societies in Great Britain, the Netherlands, France and Spain are described in four articles in the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1909*.

¹³Nicolas, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

It is not easy to determine whether or not the founders of early American historical societies intended to form institutions like those in Europe. When John Pintard proposed the establishment of the first society in the country he probably used the phrase "a Society of Antiquaries."¹⁴ His use of the name of the London and Edinburgh institutions may signify much or little. In its introductory address the New York Historical Society referred to the proven utility of learned societies in Europe.¹⁵ Since Pintard was also the chief organizer of the New York association, this is additional evidence that he had foreign examples in mind when he proposed the formation of the first two historical societies in the United States. Also suggestive and inconclusive is Pintard's statement that he hoped the library of the New York Historical Society would become of value to scholars "like the extensive Libraries of the Old World."¹⁶

Dr. Isaiah Thomas, the founder of the third society to be established in the United States, was well acquainted with European and Indian historical societies, for he reviewed their work in his *Account of the American Antiquarian Society*.¹⁷ Indeed, the example of foreign institutions in the preservation of historical records was recognized as an important factor in the formation of the Worcester association only eight years after its first meeting.¹⁸ However, since Thomas knew at first hand the work of the two American historical societies formed before 1812, undue emphasis should not be given to the role of European institutions in the establishment of his organization.

The inadequacy of the resources for historical scholarship was of little consequence in many American communities in the

¹⁴Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, August 10, 1789, "Belknap Papers, Part II," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fifth Series, III (1877), 157.

¹⁵*The Constitution and Bye-Laws of the New-York Historical Society*, p. 8.

¹⁶John Pintard to Eliza Noel Davidson, January 27, 1818. "Letters from John Pintard . . . , I," *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1937*, LXX (1940), 107.

¹⁷(Boston: Published by Isaiah Thomas, Jun., 1813), pp. 4-7.

¹⁸*Archaeologia Americana. Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society*, I (1820), 1.

early nineteenth century. Bancroft described the New Englanders as a documentary people, but this was not true of Americans generally. From Louisville wrote the librarian of the Kentucky Historical Society, "The southern & western people are not in [the] habit of saving documents . . ." ¹⁹ He also told about a local judge, characterized by another member of the bench as "a good specimen of the south & west," who boasted he had never read a pamphlet or a newspaper. Similar disdain for the printed page existed in Tuscaloosa. Here the young professional men were all "loungers"; none studied or had "any definite or elevated aim." ²⁰ Even in Ohio local history was disregarded by many citizens; more than twenty years after the establishment of a state historical society it was referred to as a "hot house plant," which could thrive only with careful nurture. ²¹

Yet before the Civil War there were numerous signs of an incipient interest in American history. The memoirs of Revolutionary War heroes were welcomed as additions to the history of the United States and as adornments to its literature. ²² In New Hampshire John Farmer and Jacob Moore published their *Collections* . . . mainly to add to the historical information about that state, ²³ and twenty-four years before George Washington Greene was appointed in 1871 to fill at Cornell University the first professorship in American history to be established in the United States such a post had been proposed for a Philadelphia college. ²⁴ By 1842 the collectors of Americana were numerous enough to concern the librarian of the American Antiquarian So-

¹⁹Edward Jarvis to Samuel F. Haven, March 24, 1840. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

²⁰Dr. Basil Manly to Rev. Basil Manly, Jr., July 6, 1852. As quoted in Thomas Owen, "Dr. Basil Manly, the Founder of the Alabama Historical Society," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, 1899-1903*, IV (1904), 136.

²¹Manning F. Force, Cincinnati, to James W. Beekman, February 1, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²²*The American Quarterly Review*, XIX (June, 1836), 289.

²³*Collections, Topographical, Historical, and Biographical, Relating Principally to New-Hampshire*, I (1822), 4.

²⁴[William Reed,] *A Letter on American History* (Philadelphia: 1847), p. 39.

ciety about the competition his institution would meet in the acquisition of historical materials.²⁵

Interest in the development of the republic was not confined to a state or group of states. In the frontier capital of Illinois seven years after "the axe was first laid to the tree," the eloquent Judge James Hall declared, "Within a few years past, a powerful feeling of curiosity has been awakened in the breasts of the American people, in relation to the recent history, and present state of their country."²⁶ A deep interest in the development of American institutions and the formation of the national character was observed in Massachusetts in 1840.²⁷ Thirteen years later in North Carolina William D. Cooke was encouraged to publish a collection of historical addresses, because he perceived "a growing taste for history and antiquities." He believed, indeed, that a "change has taken place in the direction of the American mind."²⁸

The interest in the growth of the American nation was sufficiently strong and widespread to cause men in all sections of the country to seek historical records. The young republic had no research libraries to care for such material, so other agencies had to be established to perform this function. The result was the formation of historical societies throughout the land.

²⁵*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 437.

²⁶*Proceedings of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois, at Its First Session in December, 1827 . . .* (Edwardsville, Printed by Robert K. Fleming, 1828), p. 8.

²⁷*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 391.

²⁸*Revolutionary History of North Carolina . . .* (Raleigh: William D. Cooke, 1853), p. vii.

II

Establishment of the Societies

A BASIC REASON for the establishment of the first sixty-five historical societies in the United States was the realization that action was necessary to preserve historical records. Their destruction was apparent everywhere. In 1800 many New Englanders could recall the ruin which befell the manuscripts collected by Governor Thomas Hutchinson and the priceless library of Thomas Prince. Although Jeremy Belknap had utilized the former in the preparation of his *History of New Hampshire*, those same papers were lost before the first volume of the *History* appeared.¹ In Charleston letters of the Revolutionary Committee of Safety were "found among trash that was used to fill a mud-hole in Calhoun street,"² and hundreds of miles to the west it was observed that historical records were "rapidly passing into oblivion" because of "the absence of well directed efforts to preserve them."³

The immensity of the task made it apparent that organization was necessary if historical documents were to be preserved. Rev. Samuel Miller, whose *Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* . . . evidences extensive research, believed that every individual who had tried to collect American historical records had cause to regret that societies for the purpose had not been formed in the colonies.⁴ The benefits of co-operation were de-

¹Jeremy Belknap, *The History of New Hampshire*, (Boston: Re-printed for the Author, 1792), I, ii.

²Charleston *Mercury*, September 27, 1855.

³"Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 9.

⁴"A Discourse, Designed to Commemorate the Discovery of New-York by Henry Hudson . . .," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, I (1811), 40.

lineated by General Lewis Cass, a leading member of several early historical societies:

Individuals, however ardently devoted to such pursuits, can accomplish little by solitary efforts. Unity of action, a generous spirit of emulation, the co-operation of the community, and above all a central point of union, where plans may be proposed and adopted, opinions discussed, and collections and recollections embodied and preserved, are secured by these institutions.⁵

The example of societies in existence was of importance in the establishment of new associations. It is noteworthy that before the Massachusetts Historical Society was formally organized one of its founders wished "such a circle was in every State of the Union."⁶ The achievements of this society proved the utility of such institutions to the founders of the New Hampshire Historical Society.⁷ Only three associations had been formed by 1819, yet in that year a Philadelphia magazine commented, "The want of an Historical Society had long been acknowledged and lamented in Pennsylvania . . ."⁸

As the societies became more numerous the demand increased for new associations. Seven years before a society was organized in Virginia, a "Country Correspondent" questioned, "... why is there no *Antiquarian* or *Historical Society* in Virginia?"⁹ In September, 1838, three months after the Territory of Iowa was created, a plea for a historical society appeared in the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*. "Almost every state of the union can now boast of its Historical Society . . . Why, then, we have often asked ourselves, is Iowa without

⁵*A Discourse, Delivered at the First Meeting of the Historical Society of Michigan, September 18, 1829* (Detroit: Printed by Geo. L. Whitney, 1830), pp. 5-6.

⁶Dr. John Eliot to Dr. Benjamin Trumbull, December 11, 1790. As quoted in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, II (1880), viii.

⁷"Sketch of the Formation of the New-Hampshire Historical Society," *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society* . . . , I (1824), v.

⁸*The Analectic Magazine*, XIII (March, 1819), 243.

⁹*The Literary and Evangelical Magazine*, VII (January, 1824), 40-42.

one?"¹⁰ A historical society was organized in Burlington five years later, fourteen years before the present state association was started in Iowa City in 1857.

State pride played a part in the formation of several societies. The founders of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania were conscious of a "duty" to preserve state records,¹¹ and the principal organizer of the Alabama Historical Society doubted if patriotism could survive without historical memorials.¹² In a second southern organization devotion to a state was linked with a desire to preserve the memory of its pioneers.¹³

Respect for ancestors operated in the organization of two New England societies. The founders of one, the Essex Historical Society, cherished a "grateful recollection" of their forbears and intended "to transmit to posterity all memorials which shall tend to perpetuate the remembrance of those distinguished men . . ."¹⁴ The second, the Old Colony Historical Society, was formed principally because of "loyalty to ancestors."¹⁵ Its seal bears the baptismal vow, "Patrium memoriam custodire."

At least two early historical societies were organized to promote the self-interest of their founders. The first association west of the seaboard states was formed by Judge John Haywood, historian of Tennessee, "as an auxiliary to his labors."¹⁶ The minutes of the society reveal the considerable extent of the assistance furnished in the preparation of his *Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee* and *Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*. These volumes were completed within a

¹⁰As quoted in William Peterson, "Cultural Aspirations [in Iowa in 1838]," *The Palimpsest*, XIX (May, 1938), 171.

¹¹"Constitution . . .," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, I (1826), 5.

¹²Thomas Owen, "Dr. Basil Manly, the Founder of the Alabama Historical Society," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, 1899-1903*, IV (1904), 130-131.

¹³Historical Society of Mississippi, [*Address to the People of the State* (Jackson: 1858)], p. 1.

¹⁴[*Petition for Incorporation . . .* (Salem: 1821)], p. 1.

¹⁵John Ordronaux, "Oration," *Collections of the Old Colony Historical Society*, No. 7 (1909), 27.

¹⁶John Lea, "History of the Tennessee Historical Society," *The American Historical Magazine*, VI (October, 1901), 354.

few years, and soon afterwards the Tennessee Antiquarian Society disbanded. In Georgia, I. K. Tefft, autograph collector, and Dr. William Stevens, who had planned to write a history of the state, believed it would be to their advantage to have a historical society in Savannah. After organization of the Georgia Historical Society, the former, through his office of corresponding secretary, made numerous additions to his collection of autographs, and the latter was invited to prepare his history under the auspices of the institution.¹⁷

Other causes, of course, were instrumental in the establishment of American historical societies. One was formed to arouse sufficient public interest to induce the legislature to obtain from England the colonial records of the state,¹⁸ and another was instituted because of the death of a local historian.¹⁹ After this occurrence the townspeople realized that without a historical association their local history would not be preserved. The Jeffersonville Historical Society, in the hills of southwestern Virginia, had a unique beginning. It owed its origin to the awakening of interest in cultural institutions caused by "the recent excitement of railroad subjects."²⁰

Most of the historical societies in the United States before the Civil War were formed in one of two ways. By the more common method several men would agree to organize a society and then announce a date for the initial meeting. Here was voted a resolution to organize a society, and at this or a later meeting a constitution was adopted and officers were elected. After the society was fully organized, application was usually made to the legislature for an act of incorporation.

According to the second method a charter was granted by the state in response to a petition submitted before any regular

¹⁷[William Harden,] "The Georgia Historical Society," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, I (March, 1917), 6.

¹⁸*First Report of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina* . . . (Hillsborough: Printed by Dennis Heartt, 1845), p. 3.

¹⁹Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society, *History of the Town of Dorchester, Massachusetts* (Boston: Ebenezer Clapp, Jr., 1859), p. iii.

²⁰*Richmond Examiner*, January 16, 1852. As quoted in George Bickley, *History of the Settlement and Indians Wars of Tazewell County, Virginia* . . . (Cincinnati: Morgan & Co., 1852), pp. 129-130.

meetings had been held. Organization took place at a meeting called by a certain number, or a designated member, of the incorporators. In Connecticut, Michigan, and Iowa, historical societies were formed soon after a charter was granted, but in Vermont two years elapsed between the passage of an act of incorporation and the first meeting at Montpelier. A charter for the North Carolina Historical Society was granted in 1833 to nine subscribers, including Governor David L. Swain, but the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina was not organized until 1844, nine years after Swain had become president of the state university. An interesting variation of this method occurred in Minnesota, where Charles K. Smith, territorial secretary, without knowledge of the bearers, included the names of eighteen men in a petition for an act of incorporation. The act was approved, and one month later the Minnesota Historical Society was organized in the office of Secretary Smith.

The actual formation of most societies was carefully prearranged by their founders, but at least three, including the state associations in Rhode Island and South Carolina, were organized in "accidental" meetings. The Wyoming Historical and Geological Society was instituted under similar circumstances. A number of men had gathered at the Old Fell Tavern in Wilkes-Barre on February 11, 1858, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the successful experiment of burning anthracite coal in a grate. It was there proposed to establish a historical society, and within a few months the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society was fully organized.²¹

Probably no society had a more impressive beginning than that of the Logan Historical Society. On July 28, 1841, before an assemblage of early settlers of Ohio and residents of the Scioto Valley, Judge Corwin, a pioneer of the preceding century, stated in a short, forceful address that they were at or near the place where Logan, the Mingo chief, had delivered his celebrated speech. Judge Corwin concluded by proposing the formation of a society to collect the scattered fragments of Western history and to honor Logan. Out of respect to the memory of the noble

²¹Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* . . . (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), pp. 436-437.

Indian every man removed his hat, "whereupon," to quote an eye-witness, "uncovered as we were in the sight of God, all present resolved themselves into a society . . ." ²²

Historical societies can exist only where there is considerable interest in cultural institutions. Since this is likely to be found in the capital or metropolis of a region, or in a college or university town, a great majority of early American historical societies were located in such communities. When the seat of government is also the largest city in a state or county, the reasons for making it the home of a historical society are obvious. The advantages of establishing the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, and the Ulster Historical Society in Kingston were probably recognized by their founders. In the South the reasons for the selection of Richmond and Charleston as the seats of the Virginia and South Carolina historical societies must have seemed compelling. ²³

If the capital of a state was not its metropolis, there were frequently good reasons for locating a historical society in one or the other. In the older states there was a tendency to form such institutions in large cities, because here were the largest number of persons interested in history. The principal historical associations in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Louisiana were established in cities larger than the capitals of their respective states. This is not conclusive, for the state societies in Connecticut and New Hampshire were located in the capitals, Hartford and Concord. In Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota historical societies were located at capitals, which were not the largest cities of these states. Thereby it was hoped to develop a close relationship between the state and the society. The situation was clear to the founders of the Missouri organization: "It is appropriate that the Historical and Philosophical Society of the State, should be located at the

²²*The American Pioneer*, I (January, 1842), 5.

²³The foremost organizer of the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society stated that its meetings were held in Richmond to overcome the "condition of rural population" which had retarded the intellectual life of the state. "President Cushing's Address," *Collections of the Virginia Historical & Philosophical Society*, I (1833), 10.

seat of government, and that the public authorities, and citizens from every county, should aid in carrying it into successful operation."²⁴

The state historical societies in North Carolina, Alabama, and Iowa were located in university towns. This was true of the two southern societies because their principal founders were university presidents. The Iowa association was legally connected with the state university to protect it from political manipulation.²⁵ The benefits of affiliation with an educational institution were not so great as might be expected. Papers of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina were published in the *North Carolina University Magazine*, yet the organization lost many valuable documents because David L. Swain, president of the university, failed to keep them apart from his own collections. The shortcomings of the Alabama Historical Society cannot be attributed to its association with higher education, because the little life it had was furnished by university men. The advantages of its location were more tangible to the State Historical Society of Iowa, for it was provided with a room in a university building.

Other societies maintained close relationships with educational institutions. The Historical and Geological Society of Norwalk Seminary kept its cabinet at that school, and a later Ohio organization, the Fire Lands Historical Society, held meetings and deposited its library in the hall of Whittlesey Academy in Norwalk. The Maine Historical Society, founded in Portland in 1822, still kept its library at Bowdoin College in 1859.²⁶

Special considerations determined the locations of the American Antiquarian Society and the Historical Society of Florida. The founder of the former, with fresh memories of raids made on coastal towns in the War of 1812, said that "safety" was the reason for keeping his collections in Worcester. "An inland situation,

²⁴*Annals of the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society*, I (1848), 3.

²⁵Benjamin Shambaugh, "A Brief History of the State Historical Society of Iowa," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, I (April, 1903), note on p. 146.

²⁶*Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, VI (1859), note on p. xx.

experience convinces us, is more secure than a town accessible by sea; and, in a small town they will not be so much exposed to destruction by fire as they would be in a large one."²⁷ Because of its many historical associations, St. Augustine was chosen as the home of the Historical Society of Florida. The fate of the organization might indicate that historical societies cannot thrive on associations alone. When the Florida society was revived in 1902, it was located not in St. Augustine but in Jacksonville.

Although all early American historical societies were organized to collect, preserve, and diffuse the materials for the history of the United States or a section of it, their aims were by no means uniform. Some of the organizations formed before 1861 desired to acquire practically everything which related to American history, and others limited their activities to defined areas or to specified subjects. The scope of the early societies is so varied that the common classifications of "national, state, and local" do not apply to many of them.

The interests of the first three societies were not confined to sections of the United States. The plan for the earliest society embraced the history of the entire country, and the inquiries of the second extended to the "whole continent." Unmindful of the aim of the New York society, the American Antiquarian Society proposed in 1812 to discover the antiquities of the continent, because there was "no public association for such purposes in the United States."²⁸ Twenty-three years later the American Historical Society was organized in Washington. Its founders declared with surprising simplicity that, since the researches of existing societies were chiefly directed to state history, "an Institution, proposing a more comprehensive range of inquiry, was needed..."²⁹

Societies did not restrict themselves to the regions indicated in their names. The state societies of Georgia and Alabama

²⁷*Communication from the President of the American Antiquarian Society* . . . (Worcester: Printed by William Manning [1815]), p. 11.

²⁸"Petition to the Legislature of Massachusetts," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 1.

²⁹*Transactions of the American Historical Society* . . . , I (1839), 4.

aimed to collect materials for the history of the United States as well as that for their respective states. The Historical Society of Michigan purposed to collect whatever related to the history of the "Country of the Lakes," and the Historical Society of the State of Louisiana was concerned with "all that country formerly possessed by France and Spain under the name of Louisiane." The Chicago Historical Society and the Historical Society of Pittsburgh were not "local" societies. The first undertook to gather records of the great Northwest, and the second was occupied with the history of the entire country.

The area for concentration was defined for some of the later organizations. State boundaries marked the limits of investigations to be undertaken by associations formed in Missouri, South Carolina, Florida, and Iowa, and the activities of a number of small organizations were confined to parts of states. The attention of the Jeffersonville Historical Society was restricted to southwestern Virginia, and both the Ulster Historical Society and the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society made several counties the subject of their studies. The Essex Historical Society and the Yates County Historical Society each proposed to collect historical materials of a county, and an occasional organization, such as the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society, attended to the records of a single town.

Early American historical associations were interested in many kinds of research. The phrase "natural, civil, literary, ecclesiastical, and aboriginal history," from the statement of objects of the Historical Society of Michigan, typifies the broad conception of the term adopted by most institutions. As if these objects were not sufficiently inclusive, the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society instituted in 1831 was designed "to occupy a more extensive range than that of any other now existing in our country. It embraces the whole field of history, science, and the arts . . ."³⁰

Natural history was emphasized by most of the institutions during their early years. The society in Alabama encouraged re-

³⁰"President Cushing's Address," *Collections of the Virginia Historical & Philosophical Society*, I (1833), 33.

search in every phase of the subject,³¹ and the State Historical Society of Iowa solicited specimens which would exhibit Iowa fauna and flora.³² Two small societies, the Historical and Geological Society of Norwalk Seminary and the Orleans County Natural and Civil History Society, proposed not only to collect specimens of geology and natural history but to promote the study of those subjects.

The interest of historical societies in genealogical research is well known, but few societies were organized to conduct such investigations. The first speaker before the Litchfield County Historical and Antiquarian Society proposed as a proper object for the association the preparation of "faithful genealogical tables,"³³ and the acquisition of "biographical notices, genealogical tables, [and] family records" was recommended to the South Carolina Historical Society.³⁴ Two New York local societies included the collection and compilation of genealogical tables in their statements of aims,³⁵ but no other similar references have been found.

At their inception several organizations planned to devote special attention to Indian memorials. The Chicago Historical Society, for instance, purposed in 1856 to encourage investigation of aboriginal mounds as the American Antiquarian Society had done in the first quarter of the century. Two historical associations were named after Indian chiefs. The first, the Red Jacket Historical Society in Buffalo, included among its objects the preservation of Indian relics and traditions and the restoration "as

³¹*Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, at Its First Annual Meeting* . . . (Tuskaloosa: Printed by J. W. & J. F. Warren, 1852), p. 10.

³²*Biennial Report of the Executive Committee, of the Iowa State Historical Society* . . . (Iowa, General Assembly, Legislative Documents, 1859-1860), p. 10.

³³G. H. Hollister, *Introductory Address* . . . (Hartford: Press of Case, Tiffany and Company, 1856), p. 14.

³⁴F. A. Porcher, "Address Pronounced at the Inauguration of the South-Carolina Historical Society, June 28, 1857," *Collections of the South-Carolina Historical Society*, I (1857), 10-11.

³⁵*Collections of the Ulster Historical Society*, I, Part I (1860), 9; and "An Act to Incorporate the Rochester Historical Society," *Laws of the State of New York, Passed at the Eighty-Fourth Session of the Legislature* . . . (Albany: Munsell & Rowland, 1861), p. 585.

far as practicable" of their place names. The second, the Logan Historical Society in Chillicothe, was formed in part to erect a monument to the Mingo chief, on which was to be engraved in gilt letters his celebrated speech as given in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes, on the State of Virginia*.

Historical societies usually are formed to collect written and printed records, but in the South and West several aimed to preserve history which existed only in tradition. This was true of institutions in South Carolina, Florida, and Mississippi. The first intended to invite contributions "of every sort which can throw light on our past; traditions, legends, anecdotes of persons and places, letters, pictures, maps, songs and ballads..."³⁶ In Ohio, Missouri, and Iowa it was stated at the formation of the state historical societies that they hoped to obtain information from the pioneers themselves. The deaths of John Sevier in 1815, George Rogers Clark in 1818, and Daniel Boone in 1820 must have impressed Westerners with the necessity for quick action. The historian who founded the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society declared: "The emergency admits of no delay ... The slow but certain operation of time is yearly removing from this theatre on which they had so long and so notably acted, many who could have given valuable additions to our knowledge of the past."³⁷

A few historical societies professed aims not ordinarily associated with such institutions. The Historical Society of Pittsburgh had for an object "the advancement of knowledge in ancient and modern history," and the Staten Island Historical Society designed "to promote Scientific and other Knowledge by means of Lectures upon Scientific and Literary Subjects." After the Minnesota Historical Society received its first appropriation from the legislature, among its "duties" was included the cultivation of "the useful, and liberal arts, science, and literature."

³⁶F. A. Porcher, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁷J. G. M. Ramsey, *Address, Delivered before the "East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society ..."* (Knoxville: Printed by F. S. Heiskell, 1834), p. 10. Cf., Charles Sydnor, *A Gentleman of the Old Natchez Region*, Benjamin L. C. Wailes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1938), p. 238.

After the American Antiquarian Society had devoted more than thirty years to the collection of historical materials, the narrow scope of its activities became irksome. The Committee on Future Interests of the Society reported, "It never was designed that this Society should merely collect for others to use. . . . but that the Society itself should exert an influence upon the community and the passing age."³⁸ This view of the enlarged aims of a historical society was not widely held. More common was the opinion that the function of the institution "though respectable, is of a humbler degree. Our first duty is to collect and preserve materials for future history, and to elucidate historical facts, which may have become obscure by the operation of time."³⁹

³⁸*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 504.

³⁹Peter Du Ponceau, "An Inaugural Discourse, Delivered on the Third of June, 1837 . . .," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, IV, Part I (1840), 22.

III

Professional Men and Scholars

LIKE PINTARD'S IDEA of a Society of American Antiquarians," wrote Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap before the formation of the Massachusetts Historical Society, "but where will you find a sufficiency of members of suitable abilities and leisure?"¹ This question introduces the important subject of the qualities of the men who organized and supported the early American historical societies. They may be classed as founders, members, and officers; but, since no quality is peculiar to one group, it is convenient to discuss the three together.

The founders of the institutions were predominately from educated professional classes. The ten who founded the earliest society included, besides Rev. Belknap, James Sullivan, later governor of Massachusetts, George R. Minot, author of the *History of the Insurrections of Massachusetts*, Thomas Wallcut, the antiquarian, a lawyer, a physician, and three ministers.² This is no exceptional instance. Ten of the eleven founders of the New York Historical Society and at least sixteen of the early members of the Rhode Island Historical Society were college graduates.³ "Statesmen, Judges [and] scholars" organized the Maine Histori-

¹Letter dated October 3, 1790. "Belknap Papers, Part II," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fifth Series, III (1877), 237.

²Charles Smith, *A Short Account of the Massachusetts Historical Society* . . . (Boston: Printed for the Society, 1908), p. 7.

³Robert Kelby, *The New York Historical Society, 1804-1904* (New York: Published for the Society, 1905), pp. 3-15; and Zachariah Allen, "Anniversary Address," *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 1872-3, 1873, pp. 108-114.

cal Society,⁴ and "leading men of affairs, statesmen, physicians, attorneys and ministers of the gospel" formed the association in Mississippi.⁵ The Historical Society of Tennessee had forty original members who represented "the various interests and professions—legal, medical, mercantile and mechanical—which have given dignity, stability and strength to civil society..."⁶ The twenty-nine incorporators of the Essex Historical Society were especially distinguished. Among these were eleven who had been awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws, three who became presidents of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, two former cabinet members, United States senators and representatives, judges, and college professors.⁷

A similar preponderance of professional men existed among the members of the associations. The Historical Society of Florida included among its members the governor of the state, the mayor of Jacksonville, Congressmen, clergymen, physicians, and a large number of lawyers and judges.⁸ A detailed classification of the occupations of members of the Maine Historical Society reveals that among the 268 original and associate resident members before 1860 were 140 lawyers, 56 clergymen, 16 physicians, and a sprinkling of professors, merchants, and "gentlemen."⁹

The large number of lawyers in the early societies causes no surprise. The prevalence in the United States of the system of common law probably stimulated in its practitioners an interest in American history. A less obvious but perhaps more important reason was the state of the legal profession in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although

⁴William Willis, "Introductory Address . . .," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, IV (1856), 7.

⁵Z. T. Leavell, "The Ante-Bellum Historical Society of Mississippi," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, VIII (1904), 227-228.

⁶John Lea, "History of the Tennessee Historical Society," *The American Historical Magazine*, VI (October, 1901), 353.

⁷Robert Rantoul, "The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Essex Historical Society," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, XXXII (1896), 107.

⁸C. S. Fleming, "Observations on Original Members," *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, III, No. 1 (July, 1924), 10-16.

⁹"Catalogue of the Past and Present Members . . .," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, VII (1876), 5-17.

training for the law was inferior to that for medicine, the bar was the profession which attracted the greatest number of able men.¹⁰ Since the early historical societies everywhere attracted men of ability, it is reasonable that lawyers should constitute a high percentage of their members.

The officers of the early American historical societies also were men of education and talent, and often they were persons of prominence. Before 1861 the New York Historical Society had ten presidents, seven of whom were college graduates.¹¹ Nine, including Gouverneur Morris, DeWitt Clinton, and Albert Gallatin, pursued active careers in law or politics. In its first four decades the Maine Historical Society had seven presidents, of whom one was a graduate of Dartmouth and six were graduates of Harvard.¹² Four of the seven were lawyers or jurists; the others were a clergyman, a large landowner, and a college president. Early officers of the New Jersey Historical Society include three justices of the state supreme court, three who became Congressmen, and a former president of Columbia College.¹³ The Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society, the American Historical Society, and the American Antiquarian Society had as presidents Chief Justice Marshall, former President John Quincy Adams, and Hon. Edward Everett respectively. The last was elected soon after he became Minister to Great Britain, and he held the society office during his four years in London.

Because of their locations, several societies chose officers principally from special groups. The Alabama Historical Society, established at Tuscaloosa, selected trustees of the state university to be president and second vice-president.¹⁴ A tutor in mathematics was elected corresponding secretary, and the presi-

¹⁰[Joseph Cogswell,] "On the State of Learning in the United States of America," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, IV (March, 1819), 642-644.

¹¹Kelby, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-49, *passim*.

¹²William Willis, "Inaugural Address . . .," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, V (1857), xxiii-lxviii.

¹³William Nelson, *Fifty Years of Historical Work in New Jersey* (Paterson: Press Printing and Publishing Co., 1898), pp. 18-64.

¹⁴Mitchell Garrett, "The Preservation of Alabama History," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, V (January, 1928), 4.

dent of the university was the most active member of the executive committee. The most western of the associations formed before the Civil War was the Historical Society of New Mexico in Santa Fé. Army officers were leaders in the cultural activities of the region, so they held important posts in its historical society. Colonel John B. Grayson was chosen first president, and an army surgeon, William J. Sloan, was named corresponding secretary.¹⁵

An American historical society is rarely represented as an association of young men, yet youth was prevalent in the early organizations. All of the distinguished founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society were under fifty,¹⁶ and seven of the organizers of the New York Historical Society were not over thirty-five.¹⁷ The oldest of the founders of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania was thirty-eight;¹⁸ none of the members of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois had passed "the vigor of life";¹⁹ and most of the early members of the New Jersey Historical Society were less than forty and many were under thirty.²⁰ Other societies considered youth a desideratum. The Council of the American Antiquarian Society recommended the selection of "young and enterprising" corresponding members who would be more active in the work of the institution,²¹ and at least one organization, the Yates County Historical Society, expired because it had failed to attract younger members.²²

Members of one historical society often were active in the work of another. Of the eleven residents of Newport who joined the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1822, the year of its organization, two survived to become founders of the Newport

¹⁵*The Historical Magazine* . . . , IV (March, 1860), 78.

¹⁶Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁷Kelby, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-15.

¹⁸Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1940), I, 78.

¹⁹James Hall, *An Address Delivered before the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois, at Its Second Annual Meeting, in December, 1828* (Vandalia: Printed by Robert Blackwell, 1829), p. 17.

²⁰Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²¹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 538.

²²Lewis Aldrich, ed., *History of Yates County, N. Y.* . . . (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892), p. 118.

Historical Society.²³ Eight of the twelve other residents of Newport who joined the state society before 1853 assisted in the formation of the local association. George Bancroft, Lewis Cass, Edward Everett, Lewis Henry Morgan, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, and many others participated in the work of more than one society. Jacob B. Moore, co-editor of *Collections, Topographical, Historical, and Biographical, Relating Principally to New-Hampshire*, was active in historical societies in three sections of the country. He was a founder of the New Hampshire Historical Society in 1823, librarian of the New York Historical Society in 1848, and a leader in the movement to establish a historical society in California in 1852. Dr. Samuel Miller's part in the formation of two institutions is remarkable. At the age of thirty-five he was a founder of the New York Historical Society, and forty years later he helped to organize the state association in New Jersey.

The influence of New Englanders in the formation of early American historical societies has been suggested elsewhere.²⁴ John H. Farnham, founder of the Indiana Historical Society, and Henry Adams Bullard, founder of the Louisiana Historical Society, were graduates of Harvard, and the principal organizers of the Virginia and Kentucky associations were former Massachusetts men. Moreover, the supporters of several societies in the South and West were natives of New England. The librarian of the Kentucky Historical Society lamented, "We want the spirit of cooperation, which you find in Massachusetts. Most of the interest & labour for our library is given by the Yankee residents here."²⁵ From Madison wrote Lyman Draper, "... our Wisconsin Society is strongly represented by natives & descendants of New England."²⁶

²³M. E. Powel, *Some of Our Founders. Sixty Years Ago* (Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, No. 16 [1915]), p. 2.

²⁴Julian Boyd, "State and Local Societies in the United States," *The American Historical Review*, XL (October, 1934), 14-16.

²⁵Edward Jarvis, Louisville, to Rev. Thaddeus Mason Harris, August 18, 1840. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁶Lyman Draper to Alexander Young, March 13, 1854. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Notwithstanding this evidence, it is a mistake to attribute the leadership in the early organizations to men of New England stock. In every region the associations attracted able men irrespective of their line of descent. The societies in Alabama, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee were formed by men born and trained in the South. Brantz Mayer, a native of Baltimore who had traveled in Asia, was for many years the most active member of the Maryland Historical Society, and a Pennsylvanian, James Hall, was president of the initial society in the Northwest. Two of the most eminent and scholarly presidents, Peter S. Du Ponceau and Albert Gallatin, were born and educated in Europe. And Draper, although he emphasized the importance of New Englanders in the Wisconsin organization to the Massachusetts Historical Society, told the New York Historical Society that "most of the managers of our Society" were from his own state, New York.²⁷

At the age of seventy-six Reverend Samuel Miller wrote to the newly organized New Jersey Historical Society, "I have observed, in regard to all the literary and scientific societies with which I have ever been connected, that, however numerous the members, some dozen or two of them performed almost all the work."²⁸ The typical member of an early American historical association has been presented here as a young, successful professional man, probably a lawyer, who possibly had affiliations with a similar society. To complete the picture attention should be given to the men who did "almost all the work."

Most of the successful societies were sustained by the faithful service and indefatigable labor of one or several individuals. Their work is seldom recorded in detail, and their names are not remembered outside of the institutions they served. Such men were Dr. John W. Francis, William Willis, William A. Whitehead, and Rev. William Barry of the state societies in New York, Maine, and New Jersey, and the Chicago Historical Society re-

²⁷Lyman Draper, Madison, to George H. Moore, March 2, 1854. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁸Rev. Samuel Miller to Rev. D. V. McLean, February 18, 1845. As quoted in *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1845-1846*, I (1847), 7.

spectively. Fortunately, fuller records of the activities of some of the loyal supporters are available, so the importance of their contribution can be appreciated.

John Pintard, merchant and philanthropist, was prominent in many New York institutions, but the historical society was his favorite.²⁹ He secured rooms for the society in the City Hall and persuaded friends to join and present historical material to the association. His own numerous and valuable gifts included a perfect copy of Eliot's *Indian Bible* and Bradford's early map of the city of New York.³⁰ Pintard even arranged and shelved the books in the library of the society. This task, which required all his afternoons for several weeks, he did alone. The work was not without its compensations, because Pintard found pleasure in "bringing to life once more this embryo of a very valuable institution & legacy to posterity."³¹

Emerson's remark, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man" is probably truer of the American Antiquarian Society than of any other early historical association. Dr. Isaiah Thomas founded the organization, served as its first president, and provided it with "a valuable collection of books, an adequate building, and an income sufficient to provide for the care of both."³² His assistance was not limited to benefactions. After purchasing for the society the valuable library of the Mathers, he worked all day to pack and remove it, and at the age of seventy-four he "cut the grass in the orchard back of the garden, and back of the A. A. Library."³³

An antiquarian who was fearful he would be called "the greatest fool that lived in America during the Nineteenth Century" founded the Vermont Historical Society. This was Henry

²⁹John Pintard to Eliza Noel Davidson, January 13, 1818. "Letters from John Pintard . . . , I" *Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1937*, LXX (1940), 105.

³⁰J. G. Wilson, *John Pintard, Founder of the New York Historical Society . . .* (New York: Printed for the Society, 1902), pp. 25-26.

³¹John Pintard to Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, June 12, 1816. "Letters from John Pintard . . . , I" *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

³²*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. vi.

³³*The Diary of Isaiah Thomas, 1805-1828* (Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society, IX and X [1909]), I, 253; and II, 143.

Stevens, father of the London bookseller of that name. Although he had enjoyed "but little advantages when young except at a womans school," he resolved on his seventeenth birthday to collect 1,000 volumes of newspapers before he reached the age of sixty. By carefully preserving the files of about ten weekly newspapers, he had acquired nearly seven hundred volumes by 1846, when he had five years, "God willing," in which to achieve his goal. To accomplish this, he had "spared no pains, lived poor and worked hard."³⁴

At the first meeting of the Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society, Stevens was elected president and librarian, and he was permitted to keep its books and papers at his home in Barret. When the society was reorganized in 1859, it was voted to locate its collections in Montpelier, but the librarian refused to release them until he was reimbursed for expenditures made in "the organization of the Society, in attending its meetings &c., &c."³⁵ Stevens' concern for his reputation was not without reason, for the society he organized recently characterized him as "eccentric."³⁶

The record of Dr. Basil Manly's work for the Alabama Historical Society is the story of a noble failure. In January, 1850, he prepared a circular letter by means of which he invited a number of people to attend a meeting for the organization of a historical society. At the first meeting in Tuscaloosa, seat of the state university, a constitution prepared by Dr. Manly was adopted without change. Interest in the society soon disappeared. Members who had agreed to prepare local histories did not do so, and speakers could not be secured for annual meetings. After failing to obtain persons to participate in the work of the organization, Dr. Manly admitted, "I know of no way to rouse any body, not under my authority [he was president of the University of Alabama], which has not already been tried,

³⁴Henry Stevens, Barret, to Gen. J. Spear Smith, April 3, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

³⁵*Proceedings of the Twenty First Annual Meeting of the Vermont Historical Society* . . . (Burlington: Free Press Print, 1860), p. 5.

³⁶"The Diary of Henry Stevens," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society*, New Series, II, No. 3, (1931), 115.

to no purpose."³⁷ Even the executive committee failed to meet if Manly did not "go around & remind them, & drum them up." Manly held no office in the Alabama Historical Society except a place on the executive committee, yet, with the possible exception of the corresponding secretary, "he did more work and displayed more activity than all of the other officers and other members of the committee combined . . ."³⁸

Obstacles in the progress of the Alabama association caused Dr. Manly to recognize the need of a historical society for a paid permanent secretary or librarian. If the means for the officer could not be provided, Manly believed his organization should disband and save its leaders from ignominious defeat. The requirements for the place warrant enumeration: "a man full of antiquarian tastes — of habits laborious enough to make a splendid fortune,—but who is willing barely to earn a subsistence. He must have ability enough to make a chancellor—but will content himself with the pay of a constable."³⁹ Incredible as it may seem, several societies had the good fortune to engage such paragons.

Christopher Columbus Baldwin, appointed librarian of the American Antiquarian Society on April 1, 1832, at a salary of six hundred dollars a year, was an extraordinary bibliophile. At a party he coveted the books of his host, and the day he received a copy of Watt's *Bibliotheca Britannica* was one of the happiest in his life. On a trip to Greenfield, Connecticut, he stopped for a night at a tavern. After supper he went into the bar where he saw a copy of a curious version of the New Testament. He was so attracted by the volume that he would have stolen it had there been another book of Scripture available to the family of the tavern keeper.⁴⁰ Baldwin was "heartily glad" when a rival collector, Rev. William Sprague, left New England. The divine

³⁷Dr. Basil Manly to Alexander Bowie, December 15, 1852. As quoted in Thomas Owen, "Dr. Basil Manly . . .," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, 1899-1903*, IV (1904), 137.

³⁸Owen, *ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁹Dr. Basil Manly to Alexander Bowie, February 23 and May 19, 1852. As quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

⁴⁰*Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin . . .* (Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society, VIII [1901]), 203-204.

was so highly respected that wherever he went "people let him into their garrets without any difficulty, and, being a Doctor of Divinity, they never think to look under his cloak to see how many precious old papers he bears off with him."⁴¹ Baldwin's devotion to books was complete. "But what right," he asked, "has a librarian to have any affection but for books and MSS.? I doubt his authority for any other love, even tho' it be for a beautiful lady."⁴²

The young librarian of the American Antiquarian Society was a zealous collector. He arranged with more than forty persons from different sections of the country to procure newspapers for his library. The assistance of every traveler who visited Baldwin was enlisted in this work. In Boston with the temperature at ninety-three he worked all day under a slate roof to select pamphlets from the collection of Thomas Wallcut, a founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society. "I worked from 8 in the morning until half past two in a heat and dust and stench of oil that would have been intolerable in any other circumstances." When he left for dinner he could "but just crawl," yet he returned at three and labored until night.⁴³ The 4,476 pounds of printed matter he selected and loaded onto a wagon he considered "the most valuable collection of the early productions of New England authors in the country."

Baldwin was more than a diligent collector. He dug up in the woods about five hundred small trees which he carried on his back and planted with his own hands around Antiquarian Hall. He proposed to compile a bibliography of all American publications, which he hoped would bring him some fame, "and of all the fame in this world the fame of a librarian is the most to my taste."⁴⁴ In the summer of 1835 Baldwin traveled to Ohio to examine Indian mounds for the American Antiquarian Society. It was an unhappy day for that institution when his coach overturned and Baldwin, aged thirty-five, was killed.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 282.

Less amiable than the librarian of the Worcester society but equally indefatigable in the acquisition of historical materials was Dr. Thomas Robbins, librarian of the Connecticut Historical Society from 1844 until 1854. Before 1809, when he was thirty-two, Robbins began to purchase about two hundred dollars worth of books each year. This he continued to do until he had accumulated one of the large private libraries of his generation. A number of institutions desired to acquire Dr. Robbins' collection, but the historical society in Hartford was in the best position to accomplish this. Its advantage was increased when Dr. Robbins was appointed librarian of the society in June, 1844.

On receipt of the notice of his appointment, Robbins wrote, "It is all of the great mercy of God. I pray for his direction in my duties."⁴⁵ The new officer gave his best to his work. This is revealed in his diary in notes interspersed with other matter. On November 5, 1844, the early election returns displeased his Whiggish predilections and he noted, "Pennsylvania has gone for democracy. Better things were hoped for. Worked at old almanacks. At evening we had a meeting in my room of the Historical Society." Three days later he recorded, "New York and Pennsylvania appear to have gone for the miserable Polk for President, and the wicked are triumphing." The celebration which followed this news was "most disgraceful" to Dr. Robbins, and "we have reason to fear very offensive in the view of heaven." Yet, while the "terrible noise of huzzas and firing cannon" could still be heard, Dr. Robbins was "making progress with my pamphlets."⁴⁶

The entry in his diary for June 18, 1846, begins with an italicized statement, "*An important day to me.*" On that day he had agreed to will his library to the Connecticut Historical Society on condition that he receive for life an annual salary of six hundred dollars. He continued, "I think it [the contract] puts the society on a secure basis, and it is a great favor to me. For both which I desire to praise a holy God."⁴⁷ Dr. Robbins retired

⁴⁵*Diary of Thomas Robbins, D. D., 1796-1854* . . . (Edited by I. N. Tarbox; Boston: Beacon Press, 1886-1887), II, 741.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 756-757.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 828.

as librarian in 1854, and after his death on September 13, 1856, his library became the property of the Connecticut Historical Society.

The historical society founded in Wisconsin in 1846 had limped along until January 18, 1854, when Lyman Draper became corresponding secretary. At the time of his election Draper was thirty-eight, and, although less than five feet in height and one hundred pounds in weight, a man of tremendous energy. He presented a curious figure in Madison where he could be seen "almost any morning between the post-office or market and his residence, with a package of books, letters, and edibles, walking at a speed that would appal many men of far greater length of limb, and without overcoat or cloak, during even the coldest mornings."⁴⁸

Through his absorbing interest in Western history Draper had become familiar with the work of many historical societies. He had used the library of the New York Historical Society, contributed to the *American Pioneer* and the *Virginia Historical Register*, and while a resident in the East he had been a member of both the Maryland and Pennsylvania historical societies. With such a background he was admirably equipped to direct any historical organization which aimed to make its "Library & MS. collections embrace the *Whole West*."⁴⁹

Draper was confident that "our Society will at once outstrip all its Western competitors." He immediately proceeded to develop a system of exchanges with historical societies in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Ohio, and also with M. Vattermare in Paris. By December, 1854, the New York society still had not agreed to exchange publications, so Draper made special effort to win its favor. He presented the eastern society with a specimen of Daniel Boone's handwriting and forwarded information about a diary which should find "an appropriate place" in its library.⁵⁰ The unpar-

⁴⁸Madison *Argus and Democrat*, February 2, 1857. As quoted in *The Historical Magazine . . .*, I (March, 1857), 83.

⁴⁹Lyman Draper, Madison, to J. L. Sibley, May 5, 1854. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁵⁰Lyman Draper to Samuel Osgood, May 16 and June 18, 1855. MSS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

alleled growth of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin soon placed the institution in the front rank of American historical organizations. It is not too much to say that this was achieved largely through the work of one man, Lyman C. Draper.

IV

Membership and Administration

THE MEMBERS of early American historical societies were organized in classes, the most common of which were resident, also called regular or active, corresponding, and honorary. Of the three, resident members, so called because they resided within the area of special interest to the society, were the most numerous and important. They paid fees and voted, and ordinarily they were the only members eligible for election to office and appointment to committees.

Corresponding members were selected from persons interested in the activities of the society who did not live within the limits set for resident members. They were expected to represent the society in their vicinity and to furnish regularly articles of value for the library or cabinet. Officers in other historical associations, particularly corresponding secretaries, were frequently honored by election to this class of membership. Although such members "were intended to be an active working class,"¹ most institutions received little benefit therefrom. Christopher D. Ebeling considered his election to corresponding membership in the Massachusetts Historical Society a "great honor" and volunteered to collect for the institution books on America published in Germany,² but his interest was exceptional. The New York Historical Society observed in 1846 that it had received

¹*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1846, 1847, p. 74.*

²Christopher D. Ebeling, Hamburg, to Jeremy Belknap, June 28, 1795. "Belknap Papers, Part III," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Sixth Series, IV* (1891), 595-596.

few important contributions from its 177 corresponding members.³

Dr. Timothy Alden, who prepared a catalogue of the New York Historical Society in 1813 and became first president of Allegheny College in 1817, proposed to the American Antiquarian Society in 1814 that it "introduce as honorary members distinguished characters in foreign parts."⁴ This he believed would add to the respectability of the society and be the source of many valuable donations. These reasons led a majority of the historical associations to elect American and foreign notables to this class of membership. John Quincy Adams, George Bancroft, Edward Everett, Jared Sparks, and Professor Charles Christian Rafn of Copenhagen were so honored by institutions throughout the country, and men such as William Gilmore Simms and Andrew Jackson were regional favorites.

Life members, life directors, and associate resident members formed less common classes. The first had their annual fees commuted by payment of a fixed sum, and the second were enrolled for life on the executive committee of a society in recognition of a contribution of considerable money or property. Associate resident members were eligible for regular membership and paid the fees of that class but were unable to take active part in affairs of the society. This class existed in few organizations, because in most the payment of fees was sufficient to preserve the good standing of a resident member.

In rare associations particular groups were admitted as special members. The governor, lieutenant-governor, and judges of the supreme court of Connecticut were ex officio members of the state historical society,⁵ and a local society in Vermont invited "females" to co-operate with members.⁶ Although not liable to assessments, they enjoyed all privileges except that of

³*Op. cit.*, pp. 72, 74.

⁴Timothy Alden, New York, to Isaiah Thomas, April 14, 1814. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

⁵*The Act of Incorporation, and the Constitution of the Connecticut Historical Society, with an Address to the Public* (Hartford: Charles Babcock, 1825), p. 4.

⁶[*Constitution of the Orleans County Natural & Civil History Society* (West Charleston: 1854)], p. 9.

voting. The Historical Society of Michigan nominated for full membership seven old Indian chiefs "who were partially civilized or acquainted with the English language..."⁷

Members were usually elected in one of two ways. By the more popular method, the name of a candidate was proposed at one meeting and voted on at the next. Also in frequent use was the scheme of requiring nominations to be referred to a committee for investigation and discussion. After a reasonable period the name of the candidate was returned with the approval or disapproval of the committee, and the society voted to accept or reject the nominee. In a few societies a nominating committee proposed candidates for membership. This arrangement was adopted by the American Antiquarian Society within a year of its establishment.⁸

Membership, which usually continued at the pleasure of a member, was revocable by a society. As early as July 20, 1797, the Massachusetts Historical Society discontinued Edmund Randolph and William Blount as corresponding members because they were in political disgrace, and in 1811 a member was expelled because he would not return property of the association.⁹ In the Maine and New Hampshire historical associations members were dropped if fees were not paid for two years,¹⁰ and the Wisconsin organization took similar action after a three year period.¹¹ The Chicago Historical Society had four reasons for forfeiture of resident membership: removal outside of the limits set for that class, failure to pay assessments within one year, con-

⁷J. C. Holmes, comp., "The Michigan State Historical Society," . . . *Collections and Researches Made by the Pioneer and Historical Society of the State of Michigan*, XII (1888), 324-325.

⁸*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester, Published by the Society, 1812), p. 22.

⁹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, I (1879), 106, 222.

¹⁰*The Act of Incorporation, Constitution, and By-Laws, of the New-Hampshire Historical Society . . .* (Concord: Printed by Jacob B. Moore, 1823), p. 7; and *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, I (1831), iii.

¹¹"Early Records of the Society, 1849-54," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, I (1903), xlvii.

tinued absence from meetings, and proof of misconduct satisfactory to two-thirds of the members.¹²

There is no way to determine the total resident membership of early historical societies, but the average number in each society probably was between twenty-five and two hundred. Some had only a handful, but in 1860 the New York Historical Society numbered approximately fifteen hundred. This wide variation was caused by several factors including location, reputation, and self-imposed restrictions. The last needs explanation.

Jeremy Belknap's "Plan of Antiquarian Society" drafted in August, 1790, states that the membership of the proposed association should be limited to seven at first and afterwards to a fixed number. The founders of his society intended the maximum membership to be twenty-five, but the constitution adopted at the first meeting provided for thirty members from Massachusetts and thirty from outside the state. The act of incorporation placed the limit of resident members at sixty, and here it remained until 1857 when, largely through the influence of President Robert Winthrop,¹³ it was raised to one hundred. Proposals to increase the number had been made and rejected in 1834 and 1846. The foundation for these restrictions is explained in the following:

The theory of ye Society—one too that is more closely conformed to in its practical working than are most theories—is that no person shall be chosen into it who has not proved his hearty interest in historical or antiquarian research by some contribution completed or in progress—or by some manifest token of his zeal for ye cause.¹⁴

Limitations on the number of resident members were adopted by other organizations. The American Antiquarian So-

¹²Chicago Historical Society, *Charter, Constitution and By-Laws, with a List of Officers, etc.* . . . (Chicago: Chas. Scott & Co.'s Book and Job Printing House, 1858), p. 7.

¹³Robert Winthrop, Jr., *A Memoir of Robert C. Winthrop. Prepared for the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1897), p. 316.

¹⁴George Ellis to Samuel Osgood, April 27, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

ciety in 1831 voted a limit of 140,¹⁵ and the constitution of the Kentucky Historical Society restricted that association to fifty.¹⁶ The Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society which had only a dozen or so members in 1845 was "designedly limited in number, the better to secure its efficiency" by making every member responsible for a part in its activities.¹⁷ It is curious that the historical society established in the young city of Chicago should have had the most restrictions on membership. Its resident members were not to exceed thirty in the first year, nor forty in the second, and were never to exceed sixty. Only candidates who had lived in Illinois for more than two years and intended to make their "durable residence" in the state were acceptable. Moreover, the Chicago Historical Society imposed an initiation fee of twenty dollars; this was higher than that of any similar institution in the country.¹⁸

Restrictions on membership were not sanctioned by a majority of the early associations. The first president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania was hesitant to accept office because the founders had limited membership to natives of Pennsylvania.¹⁹ In his inaugural address he contended, "The members of an historical society ought to be numerous, perhaps unlimited. All who feel a strong interest in its general views ought to be admissible, and every inhabitant of our state ought to feel that interest."²⁰ Had his suggestions been followed women would have been admitted also. The South Carolina association believed every Carolinian should become a member, and to make

¹⁵*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 246.

¹⁶*Act of Incorporation, and Constitution and By-Laws of the Kentucky Historical Society . . .* (Louisville, Prentice and Weissinger, 1838), p. 5.

¹⁷*The Historical Magazine . . .*, 1 (May, 1857), 131.

¹⁸*Constitution and By-Laws of the Historical Society of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: Daily Tribune Book and Job Office, 1856), pp. 4-5; and *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁹Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1940), I, 56.

²⁰William Rawle, "An Inaugural Discourse, Delivered on the 5th of November, 1825, before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, I (1826), 29.

this feasible no "onerous burthen" was prescribed.²¹ When the Wisconsin institution was reorganized in 1853, an attempt was made to place it on an "elevated footing" and restrict its membership to an "exclusive few." This was successfully opposed by Governor Leonard Farwell, Lyman Draper, and others who believed that an aristocratic historical society could not become a prosperous one.²²

Since resident members generally were required to pay fees, their increase was advocated repeatedly. The Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society, with 102 members, believed that its membership should be enlarged in order to secure an adequate income,²³ and in his will Peter S. Du Ponceau advised increases in both fees and members to amend the languish of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.²⁴ Such sentiments were frequently and widely expressed, because at one time or other the life of almost every institution depended on the securing of additional members.

Some institutions were excessively anxious to secure new members. The Indiana Historical Society, the Litchfield County Historical and Antiquarian Society, and the Ulster Historical Society each for a time dispensed with the election of members and admitted anyone who would pay a small fee.²⁵ The Fire Lands Historical Society required of new members only that they sign its constitution and pay its treasurer twenty-five cents.²⁶ For a few years before 1840 the Rhode Island Historical Society admitted members so indiscriminately that half of those elected

²¹F. A. Porcher, "Address Pronounced at the Inauguration of the South-Carolina Historical Society, June 28, 1857," *Collections of the South-Carolina Historical Society*, I (1857), 15.

²²Lyman Draper, Madison, to I. A. Lapham, August 23, 1853. MS in "Dr. I. A. Lapham's Scrap Book of the Wis., Iowa, & Chicago Historical Societies" in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

²³*Annals of the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society*, I (1848), 6, 27-29.

²⁴Quoted in Carson, *op. cit.*, I, 184.

²⁵"Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 33; G. H. Hollister, *Introductory Address* (Hartford: Press of Case, Tiffany and Company, 1856), p. 22; and *Collections of the Ulster Historical Society*, I, Part I (1860), 19-20.

²⁶*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, I (June, 1858), 29.

did not consider notice of the same worthy of acknowledgement. The trustees consequently resolved to bestow membership "with a more sparing hand."²⁷

The most common offices in the first sixty-five associations were those of president, vice-president, recording secretary, corresponding secretary, treasurer, librarian, and cabinet keeper. An office was sometimes held jointly by two or more members, and, more frequently, one member held several offices. The duties of officers were not identical in all institutions, but ordinarily similar powers were delegated to like positions.

The president of a historical society presided at meetings and appointed members to special committees. He also called special meetings and frequently served as ex officio chairman of an executive committee. In his absence his duties were performed by a vice-president. The recording secretary kept minutes of meetings, prepared announcements of special events, and notified new members of their election. The corresponding secretary conducted all correspondence for the institution, and its monies were collected and cared for by a treasurer. The librarian had charge of books and manuscripts, and non-literary records, such as coins, pictures, and relics, were supervised by the cabinet keeper. In addition, each officer was usually required to report regularly on the progress and condition of affairs under his jurisdiction.

The corresponding secretary or the librarian, commonly the most active officer in a historical society, was sometimes paid for his work or provided with an assistant. The New York Historical Society was the first to do either. In September, 1818, it employed "a young man of probity and character" at a salary of one hundred dollars a year to keep the library open on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. Presumably the arrangement continued until December, 1822, when it was voted to open the library only on Saturdays and to reduce the pay of the sub-librarian.²⁸ The American Antiquarian Society engaged a full-

²⁷Edwin Stone, "Review of the Society," *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 1872-3, 1873, pp. 79-80.

²⁸New York Historical Society, Minutes, September 8, 1818, and December 10, 1822. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

time librarian at an annual salary of six hundred dollars a year in 1832,²⁹ and in 1837 the Massachusetts Historical Society voted to pay one hundred dollars for the labor of an assistant librarian for six months. This rate probably was reduced subsequently, because in 1846 Dr. Felt, the assistant librarian, received only \$104. John Appleton, who later held the same office, received an annual salary of \$625.³⁰ After the collections of the Library Company of Baltimore were united with those of the Maryland Historical Society, the assistant librarian probably was paid for his work, for in 1858 the committee on the library was empowered to fix his compensation.³¹

The administrative officers in many an institution were assisted by an executive committee, also called council, board of curators, trustees, or managers. Its general duties were to determine the best means of advancing the purposes of the society. This it did by proposing subjects for inquiry, obtaining speakers for special meetings, and supervising purchases. The committee met frequently and could take any action which did not require approval of a majority of the members. Ordinary officers were ex officio members of executive committees.

Certain societies provided for the formation of special standing committees instead of the larger and more general executive committee. In order "to popularize" the Rhode Island Historical Society, its board of trustees was displaced in 1848 by committees on nominations, lectures and readings, publications, care of buildings and grounds, and finances.³² At its establishment the Chicago Historical Society provided for standing committees on constitution and by-laws, publications, finance, library and cabinet, and nominations.³³ An interesting administrative arrangement was adopted by the Vermont Historical Society. Here were

²⁹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, note on p. 252.

³⁰*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, II (1880), 81-82, 357; and *Proceedings . . .*, 1858-1860, 1860, p. 251.

³¹*Annual Report of the President of the Maryland Historical Society, . . . 1858, [1858]*, p. 17.

³²Edwin Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

³³*Constitution and By-Laws of the Historical Society of Chicago*, p. 11.

organized three subject departments, each managed by a committee composed of a vice-president and two curators.³⁴

In theory any regular member was eligible for any office or committee appointment in a historical society, but in practice it was found necessary to place residence restrictions on the holders of certain posts. This was done partly to secure wider geographical distribution of office holders, but principally to insure expedition of business. The five vice-presidents of the Historical Society of Florida could be chosen from any part of the state, but other officers had to reside in St. Augustine.³⁵ The first constitution of the Wisconsin historical society provided for election of a vice-president from each county but required members of the executive committee and the secretary to live in Madison. According to a later constitution the recording secretary, treasurer, librarian, and four of the six curators had to be residents of Madison, but none of the six vice-presidents could be from that city.³⁶ In Iowa a majority of the eighteen curators had to reside in the vicinity of the state university, with which the historical society was connected by law.³⁷ The New York Historical Society had no local residence restrictions for any office, but the length of a candidate's residence in the state was considered of importance by leading members. George Bancroft, admittedly "most proper in all other respects," was "scarce New Yorker enough to be President of the *New-York Historical Society*."³⁸

Much of the work of a historical society was conducted by special committees. At the first meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society three members were instructed to determine

³⁴*Constitution and By-Laws of the Vermont Historical Society*... (Woodstock: Davis & Greene, 1860), pp. 10-11.

³⁵George Fairbanks, *The Early History of Florida*... With an Appendix, Containing the Constitution, Organization, and List of Members of the Society (St. Augustine: Published by the Florida Historical Society, 1857), p. 26.

³⁶"Early Records of the Society, 1849-54," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, I (1903), xxxvi, liii.

³⁷*Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa, Adopted at Iowa City, February 7, 1857* ([Iowa City?] Printed by Jerome & Duncan, 1861), p. 5.

³⁸James W. Beekman to George H. Moore, September 1, 1849. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

what collections could be acquired and, if possible, to obtain suitable rooms. They reported at the next meeting that a home for the society had not been found but the nucleus of a library had been secured.³⁹ This was the precursor of numerous special committees to be appointed by American historical societies. Many were formed for a particular purpose, such as the drafting of a constitution, and were temporary in nature. More important were the standing research committees.

In February, 1817, the New York Historical Society organized committees on zoology, botany, mineralogy and fossils, coins and medals, manuscripts, and books. At least four of the six issued circulars describing their special purposes.⁴⁰ The first historical association in Illinois had ten research committees, the New Hampshire Historical Society had nine, and the Historical Society of Michigan had thirteen.⁴¹ Similar programs of committee administration were instituted in the Chicago Historical Society, the Orleans County Natural and Civil History Society, and the Yates County Historical Society.⁴² The seven standing committees of the Kentucky Historical Society on agriculture, commerce, manufactures, means of travel and communications, growth of towns and increase of population, education and literature, and religion and morals deserve special notice. These were expected to observe in Kentucky the progress in their respective fields and to report on the same annually. The reports were to be filed in the archives of the society and thereby "every element of society could speak for itself, and transmit its own biography to pos-

³⁹*Proceedings . . . , 1791-1835, I (1879), 4-13.*

⁴⁰New York Historical Society, Minutes, February 11, 1817.

⁴¹James Hall, *An Address Delivered before the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois . . .* (Vandalia: Printed by Robert Blackwell, 1829), pp. 19-20; *Constitution and By-Laws of the New-Hampshire Historical Society . . .* (Concord: Printed by Asa McFarland, 1841), p. 5; and J. C. Holmes, comp., "The Michigan State Historical Society," . . . *Collections and Researches Made by the Pioneer and Historical Society of the State of Michigan*, XII (1888), 326-327.

⁴²Chicago Historical Society, *Charter, Constitution, and By-Laws . . .*, pp. 18-20; [*Constitution of the Orleans County Natural & Civil History Society*], p. 7; and *Certificate of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Yates Co. Historical Society, Organized February 4, 1860 . . .* ([Penn-Yan: A. D. A. Bridgman, 1860]), pp. 7-8.

terity."⁴³ Unfortunately, the plan did not develop as its creators intended.

The laws of several institutions provided not only for their own organization but for that of branches also. The Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio at its annual meeting in 1841 passed a resolution soliciting the formation of local associations in the state for the collection of historical facts.⁴⁴ No further action appears to have been taken. Two years later the Committee on Branch Associations of the New York Historical Society reported favorably on the expediency of forming subordinate agencies. Historical materials collected thereby were to be kept in the branches, and, if desired, copies were to be furnished the parent institution.⁴⁵

The constitution adopted by the Maryland Historical Society in January, 1844, provided for the formation of county chapters. Papers on local history were to be read at their meetings and then forwarded to the Baltimore society together with all collections acquired. To preserve close relationship between the chapters and the state institution, presidents of the former were to be ex officio vice-presidents of the Maryland Historical Society.⁴⁶

It had been urged in New York that the formation of branches would diminish the influence of the state society and keep from its library important documents which it would otherwise receive. To meet these objections Recording Secretary John Jay asked the Maryland Historical Society for details of its plan for chapters.⁴⁷ The desired information was furnished, and one

⁴³Edward Jarvis, "Some Account of the Kentucky Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XV (August, 1842), 74-76.

⁴⁴Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "A Historical Sketch of the Historical Societies of Ohio," William Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West* (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 82.

⁴⁵*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1843, 1844, pp. 125-127.

⁴⁶*Constitution, By-Laws, Charter, Circular, and Members of the Maryland Historical Society* (Baltimore: Printed by John Murphy, 1844), p. 5.

⁴⁷John Jay, New York, to Brantz Mayer, March 13, 1844. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

year later the executive committee of the New York society recommended the formation of county societies which would collect records and then, as proposed in the constitution of the Maryland Historical Society, deposit them in the library of the state society.⁴⁸

At least two other state associations endorsed the organization of branches. The Historical Society of the University of North Carolina believed that without such agencies many persons in the state might never know of its existence or learn the value of manuscripts in their possession.⁴⁹ The newly formed New Jersey Historical Society voted to encourage the establishment of units to collect local records, which were to be reported annually to the state association. Under this plan officers of branches were to be admitted as delegates at meetings of the New Jersey Historical Society.⁵⁰ Its executive committee, however, believed such agencies would detract from the parent institution, and when the Burlington County Lyceum of History and Natural Science was organized, members expressed apprehension that "some antagonistic interests might arise out of the formation of such local associations."⁵¹

There appears to have been no reason for the concern of state societies about the rivalry of local institutions. A county association in Connecticut did not wish to "rival or interfere" with the operation of the state historical society, but desired "to be regarded as an auxiliary of that excellent institution . . ."⁵² On March 20, 1860, the Ulster Historical Society instructed its president to offer to the New York Historical Society the co-operation of its members in any investigation for which their location would be advantageous.⁵³ President Hasbrouck accordingly assured the state institution, "It will give us pleasure to be ranked

⁴⁸*Proceedings . . .*, 1845, 1846, p. 29.

⁴⁹*First Report of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1845* (Hillsborough: Printed by Dennis Heartt), p. 8.

⁵⁰*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1846-1847, II* (1848), 4-5.

⁵¹*Proceedings . . .*, 1860-1864, IX (1864), 7.

⁵²G. H. Hollister, *Introductory Address . . .*, p. 19.

⁵³*Collections of the Ulster Historical Society, I, Part I* (1860), 76.

as an auxiliary to your Society, and in any way in our power to promote the great objects you have in view.”⁵⁴ Moreover, the Kingston society had provided in its constitution that in the event of dissolution its collections should become the property of the New York Historical Society.⁵⁵ At least one local association encouraged the establishment of a state organization. On September 9, 1859, the Fire Lands Historical Society voted unanimously to correspond with other Ohio associations about devising “some means for the formation of a State Historical Society.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴A. Brugh Hasbrouck, Kingston, to Luther Bradish, March 20, 1860. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁵⁵*Op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁵⁶*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, II (March, 1860), 1.

V

State Relations and Finances

SHORTLY BEFORE or after the formation of a historical society a petition for incorporation was usually presented to a legislature or other body authorized to confer a charter. An act of incorporation or charter ordinarily included the names of the petitioners and the objects and powers of the organization. Generally an incorporated historical society was permitted to sue and be sued, to hold property not in excess of a certain value, to make laws and regulations, and to elect officers. Curious provisions were included in some charters. For instance, the acts incorporating historical societies in Ohio in 1822 and 1831 and in Alabama in 1852 expressly prohibited them from issuing bank notes or engaging in banking.¹

Historical societies were often legally recognized as institutions of public benefit. The preamble of the act to incorporate the Massachusetts Historical Society reads, "Whereas the collection and preservation of materials for a political and natural history of the United States is a desirable object, and the institution of a Society for those purposes will be of public utility . . .,"² and the charter of the New Hampshire Historical Society states

¹Ohio, *Statutes, Acts of a Local Nature, Passed at the First Session of the Twentieth General Assembly, 1821-1822*, p. 47; *Transactions of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, I, Part I (1838), 2; and Alabama, *Statutes, Acts of the Third Biennial Session of the General Assembly of Alabama . . . Commencing on the Second Monday in November, 1851*, p. 288.

²*The Act of Incorporation, the Laws, and the Circular Letter of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Printed at the Apollo Press, 1794), p. 1.

that its object not only is of "public utility" but is deserving of "public encouragement."³ The educational contribution of institutions such as the American Antiquarian Society and the Kentucky Historical Society were stressed in their acts of incorporation.⁴ The similarity in the language of the statutes indicates that the Massachusetts law served as a model for that of Kentucky. The Illinois legislature stated that it was to the advantage of a state to encourage historical institutions,⁵ and that of Arkansas went so far as to say that the objects of its antiquarian society were "of vital importance to the people of this State."⁶

Legislation placed a number of societies in close relationship to their state governments. The act to incorporate the North Carolina Historical Society permitted it free access to all public records in the state, and similar privileges were conferred in the charters of the Georgia Historical Society, the Illinois Literary and Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Mississippi.⁷ A resolution of the Georgia legislature made the state historical society the place of deposit for the transcripts of Georgia colonial records procured in England at state expense by Rev. Charles Wallace Howard.⁸ In Massachusetts and Illinois legis-

³*The Act of Incorporation, Constitution, and By-Laws, of the New-Hampshire Historical Society* . . . (Concord: Printed by Jacob B. Moore, 1823), p. 3.

⁴*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), pp.3-4; and *Act of Incorporation, and Constitution and By-Laws of the Kentucky Historical Society* . . . (Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1838), p. 3.

⁵*Charter, Constitution and By-Laws, with a List of Officers, etc., of the Chicago Historical Society* . . . (Chicago: Chas. Scott & Co.'s Book and Job Printing House, 1858), p. 3.

⁶Arkansas, *Statutes, Acts Passed at a Special Session, 1837-1838*, p. 30.

⁷North Carolina, *Statutes, Acts of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, at the Session of 1832-33*, p. 54; *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), 297; Illinois, *Statutes, Laws of the State of Illinois, Passed by the Fifteenth General Assembly, 1846-1847*, p. 51; and *Constitution and Other Documents in Relation to the State Historical Society of Mississippi* (Jackson: Mississippian Steam Press Print, 1859), pp. 14-15.

⁸*Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), viii-ix.

lators voted themselves free access to the collections of the societies in Boston and Chicago respectively.⁹

Many institutions sought closer affiliation with government. Dr. Isaiah Thomas pointed out that it was desirable to make the American Antiquarian Society "respectable as a National Institution," and then queried, "Cannot a sanction in some way be given to it by the National Legislature?"¹⁰ The founders of the Historical Society of Michigan provided that members of the territorial Legislative Council should become ex officio members of the association. Thereby it was intended to give the society "official countenance" and to augment its membership while the region was sparsely populated.¹¹ In Virginia the state society permitted the governor, judges, and legislators to attend its meetings and to use its collections,¹² and the association in Wisconsin voted on January 23, 1852, to make the governor of the state its ex officio president.¹³ Soon after its removal from Columbus to Cincinnati the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio desired the legislature to grant "the same privileges and aid to our association, as is extended to the encouragement of agriculture, and other matters of like import."¹⁴

State publications were frequently furnished to historical organizations without charge, and in some cases additional copies were provided for literary exchanges. The Chicago Historical Society received fifty copies of all state publications on condi-

⁹*The Act of Incorporation, the Laws, and the Circular Letter of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, p. 1; and *Charter, Constitution and By-Laws, with a List of Officers, etc., of the Chicago Historical Society . . .*, p. 4.

¹⁰*Communication from the President of the American Antiquarian Society to the Members, October 24, 1814 . . .* (Worcester: Printed by William Manning [1815]), p. 10.

¹¹Henry Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes . . .* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851), p. 329.

¹²*Collections of the Virginia Historical & Philosophical Society*, I (1833), 8.

¹³"Early Records of the Society, 1849-54," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, I (1903), xlv.

¹⁴"Report of the Historical Society of Ohio, for 1849," W. D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West . . .* (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 76.

tion that it submit regular reports of its transactions to the governor of Illinois.¹⁵ The Kentucky Historical Society secured the passage of an act which instructed the secretary of state to forward a copy of all state publications to every historical society which desired them.¹⁶ The Louisville association recommended that other institutions support similar legislation, but it is not apparent that this was done.

A number of historical associations were permitted to keep their collections in public buildings. In its early years the New Hampshire Historical Society occupied rooms in the capitol, and in 1847 the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society was permitted to do likewise.¹⁷ Moreover, its quarters were furnished with shelves and tables at state expense. The Mississippi legislature provided the historical society in Jackson with an apartment adjoining the state library and instructed the librarian to prepare the room for this use.¹⁸ "A convenient and spacious room" in the capitol was placed at the disposal of the state historical society by the Vermont legislature in October, 1859.¹⁹ This was reason for special gratification, because the construction of the building made the collections safe from fire.

A large majority of the first sixty-five historical societies sought public financial assistance and many obtained it. The Massachusetts Historical Society in 1795 authorized three of its officers to petition the General Court for "a grant of wild lands,"²⁰

¹⁵"Biennial Report of the Chicago Historical Society, to the Governor of Illinois," *Reports Made to the General Assembly of Illinois, at Its Twenty-Third Session, Convened January 5, 1863*, I (1863), 443.

¹⁶T. P. Shaffner, Louisville, to Rev. Charles Lowell, February 14, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁷New Hampshire Historical Society, *Memorial, Respectfully Addressed to the Friends of Literature and Science in New-Hampshire* ([Concord: 1836]), p. 1; and *Annals of the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society*, I (1848), 8.

¹⁸Z. T. Leavell, "The Ante-Bellum Historical Society of Mississippi," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, VIII (1904), 237.

¹⁹*Constitution and By-Laws of the Vermont Historical Society, with Act of Incorporation, and a Catalogue of Officers and Members* (Woodstock: Davis & Greene, 1860), p. 3.

²⁰*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, I (1879), 81.

but no further action was taken. In March, 1810, the New York Historical Society petitioned the legislature for state aid, and a bill for the purpose passed the senate but was defeated in the assembly. A new appeal four years later resulted in a law which appropriated to the organization twelve thousand dollars to be obtained by means of a lottery. The society unwisely engaged its credit before the money was in hand and thereby incurred a debt which amounted to more than fifteen thousand dollars in 1820. In 1828 an appropriation of five thousand dollars assisted the New York Historical Society to free itself of encumbrances, but a request made in 1848 for assistance in the erection of a fire-proof building was denied.²¹

Soon after incorporation the Rhode Island Historical Society received a public grant of five hundred dollars,²² and the Indiana legislature appropriated the same amount to the Indianapolis association in 1859.²³ In 1845 the historical society at Hartford received from the state of Connecticut one thousand dollars to be expended in arranging and binding its collections,²⁴ and four years later the Maine Historical Society was voted a half township of land. Its sale realized six thousand dollars which founded an endowment for the institution.²⁵ Appropriations totalling fifteen hundred dollars from the state of South Carolina enabled the historical society in Charleston to publish the first three volumes of its *Collections*.²⁶ The historical association in Virginia repeatedly sought state aid in the fifties, but always without success. However, in 1852 the city of Richmond voted one hundred

²¹Robert Kelby, *The New York Historical Society, 1804-1904* (New York: Published for the Society, 1905), pp. 23-27, 36, 48.

²²William Staples, "An Account of the Rhode Island Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XI (May, 1839), 367.

²³"Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 40-41.

²⁴... *Genesis and Development of the Connecticut Historical Society* ... (Hartford: Published by the Society, 1889), p. 24.

²⁵William Willis, "The Maine Historical Society. Its Origin and Progress," *The Historical Magazine* ..., Second Series, III (January, 1868), 15.

²⁶*Collections of the South-Carolina Historical Society*, I (1857), vi.

and fifty dollars a year to the organization on condition that its library be open to the public.²⁷

Three western societies received annual appropriations from legislatures. The Wisconsin association was voted an annual grant of five hundred dollars in 1854, but the amount was doubled shortly afterward.²⁸ In March, 1856, the Minnesota Historical Society was appropriated five hundred dollars a year,²⁹ and before a state historical society was formed in Iowa its legislature granted half that amount each year to such an institution if and when it was established. This was increased to five hundred dollars in 1860. It was noteworthy that Rev. C. B. Smith, secretary of the State Historical Society of Iowa, utilized the example of the Wisconsin association in securing state aid for his organization.³⁰

If an institution regularly receives public money, it is reasonable that the state should control its affairs. After 1855 the historical society in Wisconsin became a trustee of the state. The association could not dispose of property without legislative approval, and printing, stationery, and office supplies were furnished by the state in much the same way as they were for ordinary bureaus. The organization was protected from political manipulation by the breadth of its membership, which included representatives of many civil and religious beliefs.³¹

²⁷*The Virginia Historical Register* . . . , IV (January, 1851), 4; V (January, 1852), 51, 53; and *The Virginia Historical Reporter* . . . , I, Part II, 5; and Part III, 5.

²⁸Wisconsin, Statutes, *General Acts Passed by the Legislature of Wisconsin, in the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Four* . . . , p. 23; and *General Acts Passed by the Legislature of Wisconsin, in the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Six* . . . , p. 85.

²⁹Minnesota, Statutes, *Session Laws of the Territory of Minnesota, Passed by the Legislative Assembly, at the Seventh Session, Commencing Wednesday, Jan. 2, 1856*, p. 22.

³⁰*Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa, . . . and Laws of the State Relating to the Society* (Iowa City: Printed at the Iowa Tribune Office, 1869), p. 14; and *Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* . . . , IV (1859), 35.

³¹R. G. Thwaites, "A Brief History of the Wisconsin Historical Society," *The State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Exercises at the Dedication of Its New Building* . . . (Madison: Democrat Printing Company, 1901), pp. 103-104.

The legislature which appropriated five hundred dollars to the Minnesota Historical Society reorganized the institution by changing its charter.³² Under the amendatory act the control of the organization was vested in an executive committee composed of not more than twenty-five members who should hold office for three years. The council was empowered to frame its constitution and by-laws, to elect and appoint officers, and to hold all property of the society. In Iowa, although it was early recognized that its historical association should be more closely related to the state, no legislative action was taken until 1872.³³

Connections between the state and the societies did not benefit the latter alone, because they widely participated in activities of public importance. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, for instance, was instrumental in securing the passage of an act which required registration of births, marriages, and deaths.³⁴ In 1826 the Providence organization petitioned the legislature for permission to raise by lottery five thousand dollars with which to mark the graves of distinguished Rhode Islanders,³⁵ and on January 26, 1859, the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society voted to apply to its town officers for funds for the restoration of inscriptions in a local graveyard.³⁶ More common and immeasurably more important were the projects for preserving and making accessible public records relating to American history in Europe and the United States.

The importance of American historical materials in foreign archives was emphasized by Thomas Hutchinson and John Adams in the eighteenth century. George Chalmers had utilized such records in the preparation of his *Political Annals of the Present*

³²*Proceedings of the Minnesota Historical Society, from Its Organization, November 15, 1849, to the Admission of the State, May 11, 1858* (Saint Paul: Ramaley & Cunningham, 1878), pp. 17-18.

³³Benjamin Shambaugh, "A Brief History of the State Historical Society of Iowa," *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, I (April, 1903), 143-144.

³⁴Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1940), I, 238.

³⁵Edwin Stone, "Review of the Society," *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 1872-3, 1873, p. 68.

³⁶*The Historical Magazine . . .*, III (March, 1859), 78.

United Colonies . . . published in 1780, but they remained inaccessible to native historians in the succeeding half century. In 1826 Jared Sparks could write, "the colonial history of America is shut up in the office of the Board of Trade and Plantations in England."³⁷

The magnitude of the task of securing copies of colonial historical records in foreign archives necessitated considerable financial support. In the British archives alone there were more than two thousand folio volumes of manuscripts which contained information of value to the American historian.³⁸ Because these papers illuminated the development of many states, the first appeals for aid were addressed to Congress. In 1827 the Rhode Island Historical Society sought the co-operation of other societies in procuring the assistance of Congress in obtaining transcripts of selected English documents,³⁹ and three years later it distributed a circular on the subject.⁴⁰ The American Antiquarian Society voted in 1827 to request the Massachusetts delegation in Congress to secure "at the present session" the passage of an act which would provide for the copying of historical documents in English archives.⁴¹

A better organized but equally unsuccessful attempt to obtain from Congress "an appropriation for defraying the expenses of procuring from the State Paper Office . . . , copies of all the documents, correspondence, and records relating to the history of our country" was made by the Massachusetts Historical Society in the fifties.⁴² A memorial prepared by a special committee including Charles Francis Adams, Josiah Quincy, and President Robert Winthrop was introduced to the Senate by Edward Everett and referred to the Committee on the Library where it remained for the rest of the session. In the next Con-

³⁷Michael Kraus, *A History of American History* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart [c1937]), pp. 171-172.

³⁸*The Congressional Globe*, April 14, 1856.

³⁹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, p. 396.

⁴⁰Schoolcraft, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

⁴¹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 216.

⁴²*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, II (1880), p. 550.

gress the memorial was reconsidered at the suggestion of Senator John Clayton of Delaware, who presented to the Senate a letter from H. G. Somerby in which were described the extent and importance of the records of American history in the State Paper Office. The Somerby letter was supported by communications from the Secretary of State, the officers of leading historical societies, and "other gentlemen of distinction."⁴³

Efforts of historical societies to induce Congress to obtain copies of documents in foreign archives came to naught, so many institutions made appeals for state legislative action. The New York Historical Society was the first to achieve success. In April, 1838, George Folsom of the committee on manuscripts proposed that the legislature be memorialized "on the subject of collecting materials in Europe illustrative of the history of New-York."⁴⁴ This was done, and the support of Governor Seward and others secured the enactment of appropriate legislation in the spring of 1839. In 1841, John Romeyn Brodhead, a former attaché at the American legation in the Netherlands, was appointed to make the transcripts, and he spent the next four years in Dutch, English and French archives. In George Bancroft's words, "The ship in which he came back was more richly freighted with new materials for American history than any that ever crossed the Atlantic."⁴⁵ Brodhead's copies of documents were deposited at Albany where they might have remained difficult of access for scholars had not the historical society memorialized the legislature on their publication.⁴⁶ This was provided for in an act approved January 2, 1849, and the manuscripts were printed in E. B. O'Callaghan's *The Documentary History of the State of New-York* and in the first ten volumes of *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*.

⁴³*The Congressional Globe*, April 14, 1856.

⁴⁴George Folsom, "Historical Sketch of the New-York Historical Society," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, Second Series, I (1841), 468.

⁴⁵As quoted in "John Romeyn Brodhead," *Scribner's Monthly*, XIII (February, 1877), 460.

⁴⁶*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1845, 1846, p. 12; and *Proceedings . . .*, 1846, 1847, pp. 15-16.

In 1836 Henry Adams Bullard, founder of the Louisiana Historical Society, pointed out the importance of archival materials for the historian of the Louisiana Territory. His understanding of the wealth of such records is noteworthy:

It is obvious that many of the original documents and records, relating to the settlement and colonization of that extensive region, must exist in the public archives at Paris, Madrid, and Seville, as well as the Havana; some in the archives of the former government in this city [New Orleans], at St. Louis and Natchez; others again at notaries' offices, here; in the parochial records of the different posts in the interior, and much interesting matter in possession of the families of some of the earlier settlers of the country.⁴⁷

The government of Louisiana was not slow to follow the lead of its historical society. Two thousand dollars was appropriated in 1847 to procure under auspices of the society copies of original documents from Spain. Pascual de Gayangos, Spanish correspondent and translator of George Ticknor, conducted much of the research in archives at Seville. At the instance of Charles Gayarré transcripts of memoirs, letters, and reports in Paris were obtained by purchase from an editor of *L'Abeille*, who had made them during a stay in the French capital.⁴⁸

The example of the New York society led the historical association in Newark to appeal to its legislature to obtain copies of New Jersey records in English archives. Motions for the purpose were defeated in 1843, 1845, and 1850, and for its third attempt the society was rebuked by the state assembly. Despairing of public assistance, the organization turned to private sources. One fifth of the required sum was donated by John Gore King, and the remainder was quickly subscribed. Henry Stevens was engaged to search the records in the State Paper Office, and he prepared eighteen hundred cards which described New Jersey

⁴⁷Henry Bullard, "A Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Louisiana, January 13, 1836," B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana* . . . (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), Part I, 4.

⁴⁸J. D. B. DeBow, "An Account of the Louisiana Historical Society," B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana* . . . (Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith, 1850), Part II, 8-9.

documents from 1664 to 1775. The completed index was exhibited in Newark in September, 1851, and in May, 1852, the New Jersey legislature voted five hundred dollars for the purchase of copies if it should be published. This the society determined to do in 1854, and the *Analytical Index* . . . , ably edited by William A. Whitehead, appeared in 1858.⁴⁹

The Maryland and South Carolina institutions also obtained indexes to their records in England without state aid. Henry Stevens made descriptions of more than seventeen hundred colonial Maryland documents for George Peabody, who presented the compilation to the Maryland Historical Society in 1853.⁵⁰ Soon after its formation the Charleston association undertook an investigation of South Carolina papers in England. This resulted in the "List and Abstract of Documents . . ." which was printed in the first three volumes of the *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society*.⁵¹

Before the Civil War the archives of the national and state governments suffered greatly from fire and neglect. Federal records were destroyed by fires in 1800, 1814, and 1833, and the public papers of at least six states were partially burned by 1831. In two states, Massachusetts and New York, fire consumed official records more than once. The condition of American public archives was reported in detail to the New Hampshire Historical Society, and that organization sent the information to the President of the United States and the governor of each state and territory.⁵²

The New Hampshire Historical Society led in the preservation of state records. In June, 1827, the members voted to petition the legislature to obtain copies of seventeenth century

⁴⁹William Whitehead, "Preface [to Analytical Index]," *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society*, V (1858), vi-xxiii.

⁵⁰Henry Stevens, London, to George Peabody, September 16, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

⁵¹*Collections of the South-Carolina Historical Society*, I (1857), vi; and III (1859), 5.

⁵²Richard Bartlett, "Remarks and Documents Relating to the Preservation and Keeping of the Public Archives," *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society*, V (1837), pp. 7-9.

New Hampshire documents in Massachusetts archives,⁵³ and a decade later John Farmer, corresponding secretary of the society, was appointed under a resolution of the legislature approved January 3, 1837, to "examine, arrange, index, prepare for, and superintend the binding, and otherwise preserving, such of the public papers in the archives of the State as may be deemed worthy of such care." Farmer devoted much time to examining and arranging the papers at Concord, and his work there has been described as "a great labor."⁵⁴

Other early historical societies were instrumental in the preservation of state archives. The Providence organization received a public appropriation for the copying of documents relating to Rhode Island in the office of the Secretary of State of Connecticut, and the transcripts made thereby became part of the collections of the society.⁵⁵ The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in conjunction with the American Philosophical Society, successfully urged the state legislature to publish provincial records in Harrisburg,⁵⁶ and the New York society prevailed upon the legislators at Albany to print the journals of the New York Provincial Congress and Convention and the proceedings of its Committee of Safety.⁵⁷ One institution became the custodian of the early archives of a state. In accordance with a resolution of the legislature in 1846-47, the Maryland Proprietary and State Papers dated from 1637 to 1776 were deposited with the historical society in Baltimore.⁵⁸

⁵³Nathaniel Bouton, "An Account of the New-Hampshire Historical Society," *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society*, VI (1850), 25.

⁵⁴Jacob Moore, "Memoir of John Farmer . . .," *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁵*Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Rhode-Island Historical Society, Submitted at the Meeting Held July 19, 1839*, [1839], p. 3.

⁵⁶Peter Du Ponceau, "An Inaugural Discourse, Delivered on the Third of June, 1837 . . .," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, IV, Part I (1840), 21.

⁵⁷Kelby, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁵⁸*Catalogue of the Manuscripts, Maps, Medals, Coins, Statuary, Portraits and Pictures; and an Account of the Library of the Maryland Historical Society . . .* (Baltimore: Printed for the Society by John D. Toy, 1854), pp. 5-9.

Early historical associations were not unmindful of local public records in the United States. In 1850 the Massachusetts Historical Society memorialized its legislature on the better preservation of municipal archives, and one year later its principal proposals became law.⁵⁹ The same institution appointed a committee to solicit information about the "history, extent, and present condition" of town records throughout the state. In the early fifties the New Jersey Historical Society sought and obtained permission to publish early records of the Common Council of the City of Newark.⁶⁰ A copy of the documents made at the expense of the city was published by the society in 1864. The Ulster Historical Society called the attention of the Board of Supervisors of Ulster County to the unsatisfactory condition of manuscripts under its jurisdiction. In March, 1860, the board made an appropriation to be expended under direction of the society, and within a few months the Esopus records in Kingston were being arranged and prepared for use.⁶¹

The amount of property a historical society could own was usually limited by law. Thus the original charter of the Massachusetts Historical Society permitted it to hold real and personal property, but the annual income from the first could not be more than five hundred pounds, and the personal estate, excluding collections, was limited to a value of two thousand pounds.⁶² Generally the value of the property of a society could not exceed ten thousand dollars, but a few institutions had higher limits and others had none at all. These restrictions were no hindrance, because the maximum allowed was seldom approached, and when it was the charter could be changed. The Boston society, for example, was permitted in 1855 "to hold real

⁵⁹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, note on pp. 463-466.

⁶⁰*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1851-1853*, VI (1853), [69-70]; *Proceedings . . . , 1853-1855*, VII (1855), 51; and *Proceedings . . . , 1856-1859*, VIII (1859), 34.

⁶¹*Collections of the Ulster Historical Society*, I (1860), Part I, 18-19, 73, Part II, 86-87.

⁶²*The Act of Incorporation, the Laws, and the Circular Letter of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, p. 1.

and personal estate, in addition to its Library, to an amount not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars.”⁶³

Public assistance did not furnish revenue equal to that obtained from fees for admission and membership. These differed greatly in the sixty-five organizations, and in many they changed from time to time. The average initiation fee was about three dollars. The Chicago Historical Society collected twenty dollars from each new member, but there were others that made no charge. Annual membership fees commonly were between two and five dollars, but they were as low as fifty cents and as high as ten dollars. The cost of a life membership ranged from ten to fifty dollars, with twenty as the most common amount. In a few organizations perpetual memberships were obtainable for sums considerably larger than those required for life memberships.

Several institutions dispensed with fees in special cases. The Massachusetts Historical Society accepted from Jeremy Belknap a number of books, pamphlets, and manuscripts in place of the regular charge for life membership,⁶⁴ and Albert Gallatin was excused from payment of “the usual fees” to the New York Historical Society because of his “valuable donations” and “distinguished public services.”⁶⁵ The constitutions of the Cincinnati and Minnesota historical societies empowered their executive councils to accept “books, manuscripts, specimens, etc. in lieu of the admission fee or annual assessment, at a fair estimate of their value.”⁶⁶ The language of the two provisions is almost identical.

At least two of the early institutions discontinued the collection of annual fees. The American Antiquarian Society took such action on June 1, 1814, on the suggestion of Rev. Timothy Alden, who also proposed to the organization the election of

⁶³*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1855-1858, 1859, p. 34.*

⁶⁴*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835, pp. 17, 23.*

⁶⁵New York Historical Society, Minutes, October 4, 1842. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

⁶⁶*Annals of the Cincinnati Historical Society, I (1845), i; cf., Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society, 1850, 1850, p. 5.*

foreign honorary members. He considered the annual two dollar fee "a degrading circumstance as it respects the *high standing*" of the society. Dr. Alden also pointed out that the fee could not always be collected and that many desirable men would not join the organization "if the pecuniary consideration remains an express condition of membership."⁶⁷ The second, the Maine Historical Society, voted in 1852 that the collection of the annual fee of one dollar be suspended until further notice, and the by-laws adopted in August, 1859, dropped it altogether.⁶⁸

Every early society desired a large endowment, but before the Civil War only a few eastern institutions received donations of importance. The generosity of its founder, Isaiah Thomas, and its fifth president, Stephen Salisbury, placed the American Antiquarian Society in an enviable position. By 1860 its funds totaled almost forty-two thousand dollars.⁶⁹ At his death in April, 1831, Dr. Thomas left three hundred dollars to the New York Historical Society. More than a decade later its librarian artlessly referred to the gift, "It is worthy the remembrance of the elder members, that the only bequest ever made to it was made by a New England man..."⁷⁰ The society received five thousand dollars from the estate of Elizabeth Demilt in 1849 and a bequest of twice that amount from Seth Grosvenor in 1858. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Historical Society both received bequests of ten thousand dollars in 1854.⁷¹ Thomas Dowse presented his valuable library to the Boston institution in 1856, and after his death a few months later his executors gave ten thousand dollars for the care of the collection.

Not content to wait passively for benefactions, societies devised means of creating their own endowments. The librarian

⁶⁷Timothy Alden, New York, to Isaiah Thomas, April 14, 1814. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

⁶⁸*Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, III (1853), vii; and VI (1859), x.

⁶⁹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, . . . April 25, 1860, 1860, p. 21.

⁷⁰*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1845, 1846, p. 40.

⁷¹Carson, *op. cit.*, I, 236; and *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1835-1855, p. 597.

of the New York Historical Society made such a proposal before the Demilt donation was received. His plan was to induce regular members to become life members and to assign their payments to a fund for the library.⁷² This was done elsewhere, but not always successfully. The regular income of the New Jersey Historical Society was seriously reduced in 1857 partly because it had such a large proportion of life members.⁷³ The Virginia Historical Society commissioned its corresponding secretary to travel about the state to obtain new members and donations. The fees for the life memberships he secured were added to the permanent fund of the society.⁷⁴

Financial assistance was derived from various other sources. In 1858 the New York Historical Society rented the hall of its new building to the trustees of Columbia College for "lectures in Post Graduate Instruction,"⁷⁵ and the copyright of the *Life of John Quincy Adams* which Josiah Quincy presented to the Massachusetts Historical Society yielded its first revenue in 1859.⁷⁶ The Wyoming Historical and Geological Society received three hundred dollars from the Ladies' Monumental Association of Wilkes-Barre for the care of the Wyoming monument,⁷⁷ and the corresponding secretary of the State Historical Society of Iowa was furnished with a pass by the Western Stage Company.⁷⁸ Many institutions also had funds for special purposes, such as the erection of buildings, lectures, and publications. Finances of this type will be discussed with the activities they supported.

The incomes of early historical societies varied greatly. Most had difficulty meeting even petty current expenses, but a few

⁷²*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1846, 1847, p. 39.

⁷³*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, 1856-1859, p. 51.

⁷⁴*The Virginia Historical Register* . . . , I (January, 1848), 11.

⁷⁵Certificate of engagement with date October 30, 1858, in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁷⁶*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 1858-1860, 1860, p. 241.

⁷⁷C. B. Johnson, *Sketch of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, of Wilkes-Barre* (Reprinted from the *Sunday News-Dealer*, Christmas edition, 1880), p. 4.

⁷⁸*Biennial Report of the Executive Committee, of the Iowa State Historical Society* . . . (Iowa, General Assembly, Legislative Documents, 1859-1860), p. 8.

were liberally supported. The Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society had only six dollars and ninety cents in its treasury in 1847, and it collected less than nine dollars in 1848.⁷⁹ It is not surprising that the organization dissolved soon afterwards. Four years after its formation the treasurer of the Fire Lands Historical Society reported a balance of one penny more than thirteen dollars!⁸⁰ On the other hand, the Chicago Historical Society obtained from its members about fifteen hundred dollars a year,⁸¹ and as early as 1844 the New York Historical Society enjoyed even greater support.⁸²

The more affluent institutions considered large treasury balances cause for concern instead of congratulation. The full coffers of the American Antiquarian Society caused its council to comment, "This state of the treasury raises the question whether we are carrying out the intentions of the donors of the funds, or fulfilling the just claims of the community."⁸³ The publication of a volume of transactions was recommended for utilization of the surplus. Within a period of twenty years the New York Historical Society experienced near bankruptcy and prosperity. The debt which had obliged the organization to accept offers for the sale of its library was not paid until 1844, but in that very year its treasurer observed:

The time seems now to have come when the Society may enlarge its accommodations, and obtain from its members and the public, the means of completing its catalogue, binding up its accumulated books and pamphlets, and publishing such manuscripts as would serve at once to enlighten the public mind, and increase the fair fame of the Institution.⁸⁴

⁷⁹*Annals of the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society*, I (1848), 24.

⁸⁰*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, II (September, 1861), 5.

⁸¹"Biennial Report of the Chicago Historical Society, to the Governor of Illinois," *Reports Made to the General Assembly of Illinois, at Its Twenty-Third Session, Convened January 5, 1863*, I (1863), 452.

⁸²*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1844, 1845, p. 20.

⁸³*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 1812-1849, p. 464.

⁸⁴*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1844, 1845, p. 23.

VI

Materials for American History

THE FIRST purpose of an American historical society is to collect materials for the history of the United States. This can be done by waiting for donations or by striving to acquire important records. Early in 1791 Jeremy Belknap figuratively expressed the spirit of the young Massachusetts Historical Society: "We intend to be an *active*, not a *passive*, literary body; not to lie waiting, like a bed of oysters, for the tide (of communication) to flow in upon us, but to *seek* and *find*, to *preserve* and *communicate* literary intelligence, especially in the historical way."¹ Belknap traveled to Lebanon, Connecticut, to obtain the papers of Governor Trumbull for the Massachusetts society, and he laid plans for the acquisition of other documents. In 1795 he wrote to Ebenezer Hazard: "We expect some from Governour Hancock's; and when our old patriot S. A.'s [Samuel Adams'] head is laid, we hope to get more. There is nothing like having a *good repository*, and keeping a *good lookout*, not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling about like a wolf for the prey."²

Belknap's attitude toward the accumulation of historical material was widely evident. Isaiah Thomas told the members of his organization that no society could become "extensively useful" unless its objects were "pursued with some degree of energy." Dr. Thomas asked each member of the association to contribute

¹Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, February 19, 1791. "Belknap Papers, Part II," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fifth Series, III (1877), 245.

²Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, August 21, 1795. *Ibid.*, pp. 356-357.

some article of value to its collections at least once a year, and proposed that members be appointed throughout the country to act as agents for the society.³ Other organizations enlisted the assistance of non-members. Dr. William Gaulding appealed to "every man, woman and child in the State" to contribute to the Antiquarian and Natural History Society of the State of Arkansas,⁴ and a local society in Vermont stated that every man "who will pick up, save, and present to the Society" any specimen of natural history "will confer a favor on it."⁵

The first step taken by many associations to collect historical materials was the issuance of circulars describing the records desired. Information about returns from circulars is scanty, but in the cases recorded they yielded articles of value. Those of the Maine Historical Society were "partially responded to, and some valuable facts were obtained."⁶ The Alabama Historical Society printed five hundred circulars, and copies were sent to Alabama senators and Congressmen, state and territorial governors, and the President of the United States.⁷ In return a number of public documents were received. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin most fully utilized the possibilities of the introductory circular. The thirteen hundred circulars it distributed in one year to persons interested in history and learning in this and foreign countries elicited many contributions of "rare and noble works."⁸

Many young societies sought literary exchanges in order to increase their collections. Shortly after its formation the Cincinnati Historical Society prepared a circular in which a special ap-

³*Communication from the President of the American Antiquarian Society . . .* (Worcester: Printed by William Manning [1815]), pp. 5, 9.

⁴Myra Vaughan, "The First Historical Society of Arkansas," *Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association*, II (1908), 348.

⁵[*Constitution of the Orleans County Natural & Civil History Society* (West Charleston: 1854)], pp. 11-12.

⁶William Willis, "Brief Notice of the Maine Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XIV (November, 1841), 148-149.

⁷*Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, at Its First Annual Meeting, Held at the University of Alabama, July 14, 1851 . . .* (Tuskaloosa: Printed by J. W. & J. F. Warren, 1852), pp. 5-6.

⁸*First Annual Report and Collections of the State Historical Society, of Wisconsin, for the Year 1854, I* (1855), 13.

peal was made to other societies for donations of "books, antiquities, and manuscripts."⁹ For these the newly formed association offered one of its 150 sets of the *Transactions* of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers. The regular circulars of the state associations in Wisconsin and Iowa included clauses in which aid was solicited from historical societies and other learned bodies,¹⁰ and both organizations planned to repay such donations in kind as soon as possible. Within a few years the two western societies conducted regular exchanges with long established eastern institutions.

A number of early historical associations participated in the system of literary exchanges developed by Nicolas (commonly called Alexandre) Vattermare of Paris. Affiliated libraries sent Vattermare their duplicates to be forwarded to collections without them. The historical society in Wisconsin appears to have entered into the arrangement with more enthusiasm than did any other American historical organization. In 1857 the Madison society sent Vattermare more than fifteen hundred volumes.¹¹ The legislatures in Wisconsin and Iowa both provided their state historical societies with a number of copies of all state publications to be used in these exchanges.¹²

Historical societies, of course, purchased books, but most of their accessions were donations. Nearly all the "scarce and rare books" in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society were presented by early members and others interested in the history of New England,¹³ and a preponderance of the manuscripts and documents in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania was "given or bequeathed to it."¹⁴ A large proportion of the pub-

⁹*Annals of the Cincinnati Historical Society*, I (1845), 4.

¹⁰*First Annual Report and Collections of the State Historical Society, of Wisconsin, for the Year 1854*, p. 146; and *First Annual Report of the State Historical Society of Iowa, for the Year 1857* (Iowa, General Assembly, Legislative Documents, 1858), p. 3.

¹¹*Report and Collections . . .*, IV (1859), 32.

¹²*Ibid.*; and *Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa . . .* (Iowa City: Printed at the Iowa Tribune Office, 1869), p. 16.

¹³*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1889-1890*, Second Series, V (1890), 453.

¹⁴Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1940), II, 202.

lications owned by the Kentucky Historical Society in 1842 were gifts from friends "beyond the mountains,"¹⁵ and more than four-fifths of all the bound volumes collected by the Maryland Historical Society in its first decade were donations.¹⁶

The associations did a great deal to encourage gifts. Letters were written to heirs of famous men soliciting publications of value, and particularly desirable publications were begged. In a single letter a librarian of the American Antiquarian Society asked a New York publisher for several volumes of the *Christian Journal*, a file of a leading metropolitan paper "for the last twenty or thirty years," and "city or state Registers or Directories, ancient or modern."¹⁷ A special committee was named by the New York Historical Society in October, 1846, to solicit from Mrs. Samuel L. Mitchell the papers of her distinguished husband, who had died in September.¹⁸ The chairman of the executive committee of the New Jersey Historical Society adopted a plan which realized "many contributions which otherwise would never have been received." This was simply to acknowledge promptly all donations in local papers where they could be "seen by the donors & their neighbors."¹⁹

Entire libraries were acquired by several organizations. The Georgia Historical Society obtained twenty-five hundred volumes in 1847 through its union with the Savannah Library Society,²⁰ and before 1855 the 343 volumes of the New England Society in Cincinnati became the property of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio.²¹ The Maryland Historical So-

¹⁵Edward Jarvis, "Some Account of the Kentucky Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XV (August, 1842), 77.

¹⁶*Catalogue of the Manuscripts, Maps, Medals, Coins, Statuary, Portraits and Pictures; and an Account of the Library of the Maryland Historical Society . . .* (Baltimore: Printed for the Society by John D. Toy, 1854), p. [50].

¹⁷C. C. Baldwin to James Swords, April 19, 1832. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁸*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1846, 1847*, p 28.

¹⁹D. V. M'Lean to John Jay, June 1, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁰William Harden, "The Georgia Historical Society," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, I (March, 1917), 8-9.

²¹W. H. Venable, "History of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio," *Magazine of Western History*, III (March, 1886), 505.

ciety received the largest addition secured in this manner. The transfer of the collections of the Library Company of Baltimore effected in 1858 increased the library of the historical institution by about eleven thousand volumes.²²

Special committees were organized to collect historical materials. In 1833 Charles Lowell, Jared Sparks, and Edward Everett were elected members of a Committee on Manuscripts "to procure valuable manuscripts and portraits" for the Massachusetts Historical Society.²³ Twelve years later the New Jersey Historical Society appointed a committee to collect gravestone inscriptions, and similar action was taken by the Philadelphia society in 1846.²⁴ Within five years the New Jersey committee obtained from headstones the names and dates of the early residents of five towns. The Newark organization also appointed a committee to obtain from distinguished Jerseymen information about events in which they had participated. Facts obtained were to be preserved for biographers and historians in the confidential archives of the society. Unfortunately, this committee accomplished little because of the "want of co-operation on the part of those who alone possessed the requisite information."²⁵

The kinds of historical material desired by early societies are given in detail in the circulars which most institutions issued soon after formation. Therein were sought all literary productions relating to the history of the United States, specimens of natural history, and every fact about the development of localities within the area of special interest to the association. Fifteen or more kinds of acceptable material were frequently itemized in a circular, and to make certain that nothing was overlooked, a comprehensive appeal was sometimes added. Thus, after enumeration

²²*Annual Report of the President of the Maryland Historical Society*, ... 1858, [1858], p. 7.

²³*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, I (1879), 472.

²⁴*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1845-1846*, I (1847), 68-69; and *The Bulletin of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1845-1847*, I (1848), 65.

²⁵*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1850-1851*, V (1851), 42-43; and *Proceedings ...*, 1851-1853, VI (1853), [67].

of the ten types of material desired for its collections, the Georgia Historical Society stated, "They solicit contributions of books, manuscripts, pamphlets, newspapers, and every thing which can elucidate the history of America generally, as well as Georgia in particular . . ." ²⁶

The first three institutions devoted much of their attention to the formation of libraries. In its first five years the Massachusetts Historical Society collected about a thousand titles, not including pamphlets, newspapers, and manuscripts. This library contained about four thousand titles in 1811 and more than fourteen thousand bound volumes in 1859. ²⁷ In the latter year the Boston association also had many unbound manuscripts and more than fifteen thousand pamphlets. The New York Historical Society collected about five thousand titles by 1813, and this number was doubled in the next thirty years. ²⁸ The *Catalogue of Printed Books* . . . published in 1859 contains between twelve and thirteen thousand titles then in its library. The American Antiquarian Society, last of the three to be formed, grew most rapidly. The gift of the library of Isaiah Thomas enabled the association to possess about five thousand volumes in 1819. By 1837 there were between twelve and thirteen thousand in the collection, and this was increased to between twenty-seven and twenty-eight thousand by 1859. ²⁹

The libraries of later eastern associations developed more slowly. The Maine Historical Society established in 1822 had less than three thousand volumes in 1868, ³⁰ and the state society in Rhode Island, also established in 1822, collected about the same number before 1857. ³¹ Between its formation in 1823 and 1850 the New Hampshire Historical Society collected only fif-

²⁶*Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), 305.

²⁷*Catalogue of the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Printed for the Society, 1859-1860), II, iii.

²⁸*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1843, 1844, 20.

²⁹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, at the Annual Meeting, Held in Worcester, Oct. 21, 1859*, 1859, p. 19.

³⁰William Willis, "The Maine Historical Society. Its Origin and Progress," *The Historical Magazine* . . . , Second Series, III (January, 1868), 16.

³¹W. J. Rhees, *Manual of Public Libraries* . . . (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859), p. 446.

teen hundred volumes and a number of pamphlets and newspapers.³² In 1866 the Historical Society of Pennsylvania had between nine and ten thousand books and about the same number of pamphlets,³³ and the New Jersey society formed in 1844 had about twenty-five hundred volumes and thirty-five hundred pamphlets in 1860.³⁴

Statistics of the collections of southern historical societies are available for very few institutions. About three thousand volumes were acquired by the Kentucky Historical Society before 1847,³⁵ and the Georgia Historical Society totaled about five thousand volumes after its union with the Savannah Library Society.³⁶ Information about historical libraries in the region is incomplete, because most were of so little consequence. For example, the collections gathered by the Alabama Historical Society in ten years "consisted of nothing more than the current newspapers of the State, generously contributed by intelligent editors and proprietors, a few old books of no great value, and a small collection of fossils and Indian relics."³⁷

The libraries of energetic societies in the West grew more rapidly than those in other sections. The Wisconsin society collected about fourteen thousand volumes in its first fourteen years,³⁸ and the state organization in Iowa collected more than three thousand volumes between 1857 and 1861.³⁹ The Chicago Historical Society acquired about seven thousand publications annually; in its first five years it accumulated almost thirty-one

³²Nathaniel Bouton, "An Account of the New-Hampshire Historical Society," *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society*, VI (1850), 26.

³³Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, II, 193.

³⁴*Proceedings . . . , 1860-1864*, IX (1864), 2.

³⁵T. P. Shaffner, Louisville, to John Jay, February 14, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³⁶I. K. Tefft, Savannah, to Samuel Osgood, December 13, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³⁷Mitchell Garrett, "The Preservation of Alabama History," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, V (January, 1928), 6.

³⁸*Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin . . . , V (1868)*, 26.

³⁹*Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa . . . ([Iowa City?] Printed by Jerome & Duncan, 1861)*, 12.

thousand books and pamphlets!⁴⁰ Of course, not every western society grew with such rapidity. Approximately eight hundred volumes were accumulated by the Iowa Historical and Geological Institute in ten years,⁴¹ and the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio collected about one thousand volumes in two decades.⁴² In 1858, nine years after its formation, the Minnesota Historical Society had "only 441 volumes in its Library, and those of minor value."⁴³

Local societies were not generally successful in their efforts to form libraries. The earliest to be established, the Essex Historical Society, accumulated much the largest collection. After union with the Essex County Natural History Society it possessed about ten thousand volumes "comprising numerous files of newspapers, public documents, local histories, &c.; also the transactions or collections of various historical, agricultural, scientific and other societies," and approximately twelve thousand pamphlets, "political, historical, educational, &c., unbound, arranged according to subjects."⁴⁴ The libraries of other local societies were much less important. The Marietta Historical Association acquired "about one hundred and fifty volumes of rare old books, a few volumes of old newspapers, and a quantity of old manuscripts, mostly letters";⁴⁵ and a second Ohio organization, the Tallmadge Historical Society, collected "235 pages of records and a large amount of historical matter."⁴⁶ In fourteen years the

⁴⁰"Biennial Report of the Chicago Historical Society, to the Governor of Illinois," *Reports Made to the General Assembly of Illinois, at Its Twenty-Third Session, Convened January 5, 1863*, I (1863), 445.

⁴¹Rhees, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁴²Charles Jewett, . . . *Notices of Public Libraries in the United States of America* (Washington: Printed for the House of Representatives, 1851), p. 170.

⁴³["Sketch of the Society,"] *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, I (1872), 6.

⁴⁴*Act of Incorporation, Constitution and By-Laws of the Essex Institute* . . . (Salem: Wm. Ives and Geo. W. Pease, 1855), p. 6.

⁴⁵Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "A Historical Sketch of the Historical Societies of Ohio," *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴⁶C. C. Baldwin, *Notice of Historical and Pioneer Societies in Ohio* (Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society Tract No. 27 [1875]), p. 8.

Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society collected 480 volumes and 5,250 pamphlets "consisting of historical, statistical, biographical, and genealogical works,"⁴⁷ and five years after its formation the Dedham Historical Society had only sixty-eight volumes in its library.⁴⁸

Non-literary records in the early historical societies included coins, medals, pictures, relics, specimens of natural history, and other objects illustrative of American life. A few institutions had notable coin exhibits, but in many natural history specimens dominated the cabinets. The vogue for cabinets of minerals was so widespread in the United States in the first quarter of the nineteenth century that rarely was an American college or academy found without one.⁴⁹ The Historical and Geological Society of Norwalk Seminary acquired nothing except a small collection of geological samples, and the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society had room for little else than the Chambers collection which it accepted as a gift in 1858.⁵⁰ This contained some ten thousand specimens of mineralogy, coins, Indian relics, and miscellaneous curiosities.

The Maryland Historical Society was the first American historical institution to support a gallery of fine art. This was permitted by a change in its charter approved in 1844. Since the purchase of original paintings was beyond the means of the society, copies of European masterpieces were acquired. The purpose of the picture collection was "the improvement of the taste of the public in regard to Art, as well as the occupation and amusement of its idle hours..." This was not directly related to the principal objects of the institution, but it was emphasized early that "the Gallery should be kept in its subordinate rela-

⁴⁷Rhees, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁴⁸Frank Smith, *A History of Dedham, Massachusetts* (Dedham: The Transcript Press, Inc., 1936), p. 293.

⁴⁹Henry Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes...* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851), pp. 259-260.

⁵⁰Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "A Historical Sketch of the Historical Societies of Ohio," *op. cit.*, p. 78; and C. B. Johnson, *Sketch of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, of Wilkes-Barre* (Reprinted from the *Sunday News-Dealer*, Christmas edition, 1880), p. 5.

tions: that it should not swallow up the Historical Society . . ."⁵¹

Other historical associations collected and exhibited works of art. In 1858 the New York Historical Society acquired the entire collection of the New York Gallery of Fine Arts, and in the following year James Lenox presented the Nineveh Sculptures. The obtainment of the former elicited a protest from members, who objected that the paintings were expensive, of little artistic value, and not closely connected with American history.⁵² In 1859 the Chicago Historical Society sponsored an exhibition of paintings to encourage "those arts which embellish and adorn society . . ." The exhibition, the first of its kind in Illinois, was visited by more than twelve thousand persons in about six weeks, and the proceeds therefrom were devoted to "the encouragement of the fine arts."⁵³ The picture gallery of the Wisconsin historical society was more closely related to its objects, for here were displayed portraits of men outstanding in the history of the state and country.⁵⁴

The lack of discrimination evidenced in their circulars brought to the societies innumerable contributions of little historical value. Relics and specimens of natural history which belonged in rubbish piles were sent to historical societies where they were often preserved. In 1815 the American Antiquarian Society received the jaw bone and tusk of what presumably was a wild hog that lived along the Potomac River in the early eighteenth century,⁵⁵ and in 1847 the New York Historical Society was presented with a bullet which was said to have been swallowed twice by a British soldier during the Revolution. The letter which accompanied this curiosity has for its chief interest a dubious tale of the difficulties which confronted an American

⁵¹*Annual Report of the President of the Maryland Historical Society, . . . 1850, [1850], pp. 7, 11.*

⁵²R. C. Hawkins to Luther Bradish, April 12, 1858. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁵³"Biennial Report of the Chicago Historical Society . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 452.

⁵⁴*Second Annual Report and Collections of the State Historical Society, of Wisconsin, for the Year 1855, II (1856), 39-40.*

⁵⁵John Lathrop, Jr., Georgetown, to Isaiah Thomas, September 24, 1815. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

physician in his efforts to obtain the bullet from the body of the hardy soldier!⁵⁶

In the eighteen thirties the three oldest societies realized that they had accumulated much that was foreign to their purposes. Many such articles were disposed of, and steps were taken to avoid similar acquisitions. Natural history specimens in the Massachusetts Historical Society were deposited with the Boston Society of Natural History, and those in the New York Historical Society were presented to the Lyceum of Natural History.⁵⁷ C. C. Baldwin, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, was especially critical of the place of curiosities in a historical collection. It was absurd, he declared, "to pile up old bureaus and chests, and stuff them with old coats and hats and high-heeled shoes!"⁵⁸ Because many antiquities were of doubtful authenticity and the record of the others was in print, Baldwin discouraged the sending of them to his library.

The impropriety of preserving specimens of natural history in the collections of historical societies was pointed out by Dr. Increase A. Lapham, the Western scientist who surveyed Indian mounds for the American Antiquarian Society in 1850. Lapham was qualified to speak on the materials which historical societies should collect, for he had been a leader in the state organizations in Ohio and Wisconsin. It was his opinion that separate agencies should be formed to exhibit the development of natural history. "No one society should undertake to include both—and although some of our records &c show to the contrary, I do not deem it a part of the object of the Historical society to include collections in Natural History—Such a collection would be out of place there."⁵⁹

⁵⁶W. B. Crosby to General James Tallmadge, February 25, 1843. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁵⁷*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, I (1879), 467; and George Folsom, "Historical Sketch of the New-York Historical Society," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, Second Series, I (1841), 465.

⁵⁸*Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin . . .* (Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society, VIII [1901]), 224.

⁵⁹Increase Lapham, Milwaukee, to Lyman Draper, September 2, 1853. Copy of MS in "Dr. I. A. Lapham's Scrap Book of the Wis., Iowa, & Chicago Historical Societies" in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Early historical societies have been sharply criticized for un-intelligent collecting. According to Worthington C. Ford, who was well acquainted with their activities, the organizations considered "a bird, stuffed by an amateur . . . as good an accession as an old pamphlet, the file of a newspaper or an armful of volumes of old sermons . . ." ⁶⁰ Ford also declared that collectors and librarians had shamelessly neglected their opportunities to acquire valuable documents, "never seeming to have a prescience of what the writing of history would demand." ⁶¹ These remarks do not apply to all the organizations, because many were motivated by praiseworthy conceptions of what collections would be useful to historians.

After 1825 serious attention was devoted to the problem of what should be preserved by historical societies. President William B. Reed of the Philadelphia organization emphasized that a historical society without discrimination in the collection of material shortly becomes a "receptacle of antique trash." ⁶² Institutions considered the value of special kinds of records, and the entire subject was discussed in the *North American Review* by a leading historian. ⁶³ Each type of material received different emphasis in every association, yet there was fairly general agreement about which were of chief importance. These were four, namely: manuscripts, newspapers, public documents, and local and ephemeral publications.

"A primary object of historical societies," wrote Jared Sparks, "should be to collect manuscripts . . .," ⁶⁴ and in this opinion he was supported by a number of the early institutions. In the first two decades after its formation the Massachusetts Historical

⁶⁰W. C. Ford, "Historical Societies—Living and Dead," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XVI (December, 1929), 309.

⁶¹W. C. Ford, "The Historical Society of Today," *Addresses Delivered at the Observance of the Centennial of the New Hampshire Historical Society, September 27, 1923* (Concord: Published by the Society [1923?]), p. 58.

⁶²*Address before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 28th January, 1848 . . .* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, Printer, 1848), p. 7.

⁶³[Jared Sparks], "Materials for American History," *The North American Review*, XXIII (October, 1826), 275-294.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 291.

Society sought above all else to preserve such papers,⁶⁵ and many associations indicated in their circulars that manuscripts were the records most desired in their collections. The societies which were particularly successful in the collection of manuscripts were conscious of their good fortune. The Gates papers in the New York Historical Society, those of Laurens and Pinckney in the South Carolina Historical Society, and the letters of George Rogers Clark and Isaac Shelby in the Kentucky Historical Society were prized possessions of those institutions.

Newspapers were energetically pursued and highly valued by the early societies. In its first twenty years the Rhode Island Historical Society procured an almost perfect file of every paper published in the state. The issues of the *Providence Gazette*, the earliest paper in that city, were obtained only "with great labor and at great expense."⁶⁶ In 1856 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin regularly received fifty-two periodicals published in that state, and pride was expressed in the fact that no other society exerted equal effort to secure a complete series of local newspapers.⁶⁷ However, three years later the state society in Iowa received almost twice the number of local papers acquired by the Wisconsin association in 1856. These were presented by Iowa editors and publishers in response to a special appeal of the organization. The Iowa society considered its collection of journals of great importance, because "in it is contained almost a complete *history of the State* . . ."⁶⁸

Sparks also pointed out the importance of public documents in historical collections,⁶⁹ and here again he spoke for several leading societies. William B. Reed declared that it was the "especial duty" of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to procure official publications, and he believed that every historian

⁶⁵*Catalogue of the Books, Pamphlets, Newspapers, Maps, Charts, Manuscripts, &c., in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: From the Press of John Eliot, Jun., 1811), p. v.

⁶⁶William Staples, "An Account of the Rhode Island Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XI (May, 1839), 366-367.

⁶⁷*Second Annual Report . . . , for the Year 1855*, II (1856), 8.

⁶⁸*Biennial Report of the Executive Committee, of the Iowa State Historical Society* . . . (Iowa, General Assembly, Legislative Documents, 1859-1860), p. 4.

⁶⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 289.

would agree with him.⁷⁰ Biographies and historical works, he maintained, can be acquired by students, but it is beyond the power of any individual to accumulate the numerous publications of the national and state governments. This task, Reed emphasized, was a particular responsibility of historical societies. According to the Chicago Historical Society, "the primary materials of Illinois and American history" were the publications of the federal government and state documents. In the latter class, statutes were of chief importance, because they formed "the proper and true exponents of American ideas and institutions."⁷¹

Perhaps the most valuable collections of the historical societies were local and ephemeral publications. At their outset most organizations recognized the use of "All Books, Pamphlets, &c. published within the State," and the acquisition of such material was continually emphasized. This may seem to betray the interest of the antiquarian instead of that of the historian, but such was not the case. The early societies collected "even hand-bills," because they believed such articles to be of genuine historical importance. The New York Historical Society and others realized that "contemporaneous publications, generally of an ephemeral character" were valuable source material, but it was the American Antiquarian Society which best appreciated their true worth. Since the principal object of its founder had been to collect every book, pamphlet, and manuscript which related to American history, its first paid librarian endeavored to collect all publications of American authors.⁷² No record was considered too trivial, because "What is called *temporary* literature, if it survives the limit of its usually transient existence, becomes *contemporary history*; and conservators of trifles are often the real annalists of their age."⁷³

⁷⁰Address before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 28th January, 1848, on the Occasion of Opening the Hall in the Athenæum (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, Printer, 1848), p. 8.

⁷¹"Biennial Report of the Chicago Historical Society . . .," *op. cit.*, p. 444.

⁷²*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 282.

⁷³*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, in Worcester, October 23, 1854, 1854*, pp. 19-20.

VII

Preservation and Diffusion

EARLY American historical societies clearly recognized the responsibility to safeguard their collections. In 1814 the New York Historical Society appointed a committee to move the valuable materials in that institution if the British attacked the city,¹ and the books and pamphlets in the Massachusetts Historical Society were insured by its standing committee.² Several local organizations, perhaps uncertain of long life, provided that if they dissolved their collections should become the property of other institutions. The Illinois Literary and Historical Society named Shurtleff College as the depository for its records,³ and the constitution of the Ulster Historical Society stated that in case of dissolution its acquisitions "shall belong and be delivered" to the New York Historical Society.⁴

Fires which destroyed valuable manuscripts of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1825 and most of the collections of the Vermont Historical Society in 1857 emphasized the necessity of safe accommodations for historical records. Former President P. G. Stuyvesant of the New York Historical Society cautioned his successor, Peter Augustus Jay, "The Society cannot as Trustees take the risk of permitting the collections to remain in unsatis-

¹New York Historical Society, Minutes, January 10, 1815. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

²*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1855-1858, 1859*, p. 88.

³Illinois, Statutes, *Laws of the State of Illinois, Passed by the Fifteenth General Assembly, 1846-1847*, p. 52.

⁴*Collections of the Ulster Historical Society, I, Part I (1860)*, 8.

factory accommodations,"⁵ and Henry S. Randall, then at work on his *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, wrote to Lyman Copeland Draper, "By all manner of means, have a *fire-proof building*. Don't now look at size and splendor—but safety."⁶

Suitable apartments were not to be had for the asking. Even as late as 1854 the rooms of the Massachusetts Historical Society were neither "safe" nor "spacious," and the New York Historical Society occupied space in six different buildings before it finally moved into its own in 1857. The housing needs of an institution and a means of satisfying them were often determined by a committee named for the purpose. The special committee of the Massachusetts Historical Society required five years in which to obtain sufficient contributions for its enlarged accommodations, and twice five years elapsed between the appointment of a committee of nine to solicit subscriptions for the erection of a fire-proof building to cost \$50,000 for the New York Historical Society and the dedication ceremonies therein.

The Minnesota Historical Society found it especially difficult to procure its own building. After its establishment in 1849 meetings were held wherever convenient until 1855 when the organization was permitted to occupy a room in the new State Capitol. The flourishing condition of the society then seemed to warrant an attempt to secure a separate structure, and life memberships were sold to raise money for the purpose. Within a few months the society was able to purchase two lots at a cost of \$1,531. The rapid increase of population and the advance of real estate values in St. Paul encouraged the association to begin construction without delay. The cornerstone was laid on June 24, 1856, and soon thereafter the foundations were completed, but here work stopped. No means of raising funds for construction had been determined, and not even a plan for the building had been prepared. The \$15,000 necessary for the erection of a home for the Minnesota society might have been secured, but the finan-

⁵Letter dated January 16, 1841, in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁶As quoted in *Third Annual Report and Collections of the State Historical Society, of Wisconsin*, . . . , III (1857), note on p. 26.

cial crisis of 1857 intervened. Work on the structure was never resumed.⁷

Several societies obtained new homes with comparative ease. The first building of the American Antiquarian Society was largely the gift of its patron, Isaiah Thomas, and \$45,000 was subscribed in less than three months for the erection of an Athenæum to house the Maryland Historical Society, the Library Company of Baltimore, and the Mercantile Library Association. The rapidity with which the Maryland and Pennsylvania institutions secured commodious edifices accentuated the unhappy circumstances of certain older societies.⁸

The occupation of improved quarters was an important factor in the growth of historical collections. During the nineteen years the Historical Society of Pennsylvania occupied a room of the American Philosophical Society, its books were kept in a small closet, but shortly after removal to its own apartment the library of the institution required much greater space.⁹ One western organization made no effort to increase its library and cabinet because it lacked adequate storage.¹⁰ A committee of the Massachusetts Historical Society reported that better rooms would bring many valuable additions to its collections.¹¹ This seems likely, for a member would have given his valuable papers to the Maryland Historical Society in 1844 but was "constrained to retain the proprietorship" of the records because the organization did not occupy its own fire-proof building.¹²

There was little conformity in the buildings constructed for the use of historical societies. The Classic Revival building of the American Antiquarian Society was completed in 1820 at a

⁷*Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, I (1872), 6-7.

⁸*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1849, 1849, p. 17.

⁹*Catalogue of the Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, Printers, 1849), Part I, prefatory notice.

¹⁰*Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society, for Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Three*, 1853, p. 4.

¹¹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, II (1880), 590.

¹²Robert Gilmor, Baltimore, to S. F. Streeter, Nov. 7, 1844. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

cost of \$8,000. Unfortunately, the structure was built on soil which contained numerous springs, and at times mud in the cellar was more than a foot deep. Efforts to improve the drainage failed, so the first Antiquarian Hall was abandoned and a new building was occupied in 1853.¹³ The Georgia Historical Society built a "small but beautiful Gothic Hall" at a cost of about \$6,000. The first floor housed the library, and the upper floor was used for meetings.¹⁴ Part of the collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society was housed in the Redwood Library at Newport, and a stone building "in the Egyptian style of architecture" was erected at a cost of \$4,750 for the protection of historical materials in Providence.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that the efforts of the Rhode Island organization to maintain two depositories did not effect the advantages expected.¹⁶

Carelessness and theft obliged historical societies to adopt precautions for the preservation of historical collections. At Columbus the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio lost many books through loans which were not returned,¹⁷ and pamphlets "taken in an irregular manner" from the rooms of the Connecticut Historical Society found their way into the library of the New York Historical Society.¹⁸ To prevent such incidents the Massachusetts Historical Society at its third meeting required that its bookplate be placed in every volume and that a record of all accessions be kept by the librarian.¹⁹ The higher value of books

¹³*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society in Boston, April 30, 1851 . . .*, [1852?], pp. 31-34.

¹⁴I. K. Tefft, Savannah, to Samuel Osgood, December 13, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁵W. R. Staples, "An Account of the Rhode Island Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XI (May, 1839), 367; and Edwin Stone, "Review of the Society," *Proceedings of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, 1872-3, 1873, p. 82.

¹⁶Staples, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

¹⁷G. Williams Kendall, Cincinnati, to George H. Moore, September 20, 1849. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁸Charles Hosmer, Hartford, to George H. Moore, April 28, 1851. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, I (1879), 14, 16.

resulting from the competition of collectors also increased the hazard of permitting records to be used indiscriminately. For this reason visitors were not admitted to the hall of the American Antiquarian Society after 1845 unless they were introduced by a member.²⁰

Restrictions on the use of historical materials were adopted widely. In 1809 a committee of the Massachusetts Historical Society was chosen to designate books not removable from its library,²¹ and in 1818 a committee of the New York Historical Society recommended that no book should be taken from the building.²² In 1840 the Boston association prohibited various works of reference, manuscripts, and newspapers to be withdrawn,²³ and at its inception in 1844 the Maryland Historical Society forbade any material to be removed from its library or cabinet.²⁴ Although these restrictions were extended considerably, they were not everywhere popular. A librarian of the Massachusetts Historical Society expressed his disapproval as follows:

Still I have thought, that for poor literary men, who are unable to be at the expense of visiting and tarrying at Boston, several days, to obtain historical facts, — and they are the ones, who do most of the writing, — the custom of letting them use our books at home is of more benefit to the public, than detriment to the Society's Library.²⁵

Private collectors caused no little annoyance to the curators of historical records. In return for the gift of a manuscript sermon to the American Antiquarian Society, its donor begged

²⁰*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 483.

²¹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, p. 212.

²²New York Historical Society, Minutes, November 10, 1818.

²³*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, p. 183.

²⁴*Constitution, By-Laws, Charter, Circular, and Members of the Maryland Historical Society* (Baltimore: Printed by John Murphy, 1844), p. 9.

²⁵Joseph B. Felt, Boston, to George H. Moore, April 14, 1851. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

for an autograph of Cotton Mather,²⁶ and a resident of Baltimore proposed to the New York Historical Society an exchange of letters of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.²⁷ Even a Vermont public official did not hesitate to write that he would attempt to supply numbers of Vermont documents lacking in the New York Historical Society "anticipating however that the *reciprocity* shall not be all on one side!"²⁸

Members of the institutions responsible for the preservation of the collections occasionally showed an astonishing disregard for valuable records in their care. David L. Swain, founder of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, gave many of its valuable letters to autograph collectors,²⁹ and a librarian of the American Antiquarian Society permitted the indefatigable Rev. W. B. Sprague to carry away a selection of Isaiah Thomas' papers!³⁰ Moreover, professional bookbinders engaged to improve the condition of historical publications did their work so wretchedly that one librarian would have given four times the price of the binding of volumes in his collection if the work could be undone.³¹

Because historical records cannot be used unless arranged in convenient form, considerable ingenuity and labor were devoted to the classification of the larger collections. A librarian of the Worcester organization proposed that his books be arranged in three comprehensive subject divisions: antiquities, general history, and local history, with thirteen subdivisions such

²⁶*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 490.

²⁷Joshua L. Cohen, Baltimore, to George H. Moore, February 10, 1852. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁸George Fred Houghton, St. Albans, to George H. Moore, September 12, 1850. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁹J. G. Hamilton, "The Preservation of North Carolina History," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, IV (January, 1927), 7.

³⁰Note initialed by Samuel F. Haven on letter from W. B. Sprague, Albany, November 20, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

It is noteworthy that Haven's predecessor as librarian, C. C. Baldwin, almost feared Rev. Sprague's talents as a collector. See Chapter III, above.

³¹George H. Moore to Rev. B. Kent, November 1, 1848. Copy in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

as political or religious history under each of the last two.³² In the New York Historical Society natural history specimens were arranged to illustrate the geological history of various states by Colonel George Gibbs, who had seen a similar exhibit in Paris.³³ Librarian Jacob B. Moore of the same institution patiently collected clippings about the Mexican War from newspapers published in New Orleans, Washington, and New York. The cuttings were so numerous that when bound they filled ten quarto volumes.³⁴ The State Historical Society of Wisconsin arranged with Josephine S. Cutter to travel from Massachusetts to arrange its collections. The young lady was willing to do this without pay, because she desired experience in this type of library work.³⁵

After a collection is arranged it should be described in such a manner that a student can apprehend its contents without examining every paper and volume. This can be done by recording pertinent bibliographical information on cards or in a volume prepared for the purpose. At least one early historical library was indexed on cards, but book catalogues were more widely used. The preparation of a good catalogue requires familiarity with the subject of the collection and painstaking accuracy. Since these qualities were often found in the librarian of an institution, he was usually delegated the task of describing its records. Before a society had a regular librarian, its catalogue was made by an interested member or even by an outsider. Dr. Timothy Alden, later president of Allegheny College, must have shown special proficiency in the work, for he catalogued books of both the Massachusetts Historical Society and the New York Historical Society.³⁶

Several factors induced a number of the early associations to print their catalogues. The members of one organization urged

³²*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 378.

³³F. C. Schaeffer to J. Delafield, December 30, 1828. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³⁴*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1848*, p. 158.

³⁵Edward C. Mitchell, Rockford, Mass., to Lyman C. Draper, May 31, 1860. MS in correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

³⁶*The Diary of William Bentley, D. D.* (Salem: The Essex Institute, 1914), IV, 232.

this because they believed such a publication would guide prospective donors in the disposal of their duplicates.³⁷ More compelling was the desire of an institution to make known its resources outside of its locality. The New York Historical Society recognized that without a printed catalogue its collections were virtually non-existent to historical scholars any distance from its library.³⁸ Also important was the fragmentary condition of American bibliography in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1855 the American Antiquarian Society considered the publication of a new catalogue because there was still "no bibliographical register of American publications to guide the inquirer who is looking for sources of information local to this country."³⁹

The chief reference sources to American bibliography before the first part of Sabin's dictionary appeared in 1866 were incomplete and inaccurate. Bookmen utilized the information in Obadiah Rich's *Catalogue of Books Relating Principally to America* (London, 1832), G. B. Faribault's *Catalogue d'Ouvrages sur ... l'Amerique* (Quebec, 1837), and Henri Ternaux's *Bibliothèque Americaine ou Catalogue des Ouvrages Relatifs a l'Amerique* (Paris, 1837), but these aids were not satisfactory. More than one ambitious bibliographer attempted to remedy this situation, but before the Civil War none was successful. Rev. Arthur Hosmer of London designed in 1799 to prepare a "Bibliotheca Universalis Americana" but abandoned the project after several years of labor. In 1834 Christopher Columbus Baldwin, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, intended to compile a "Bibliotheca Americana" modeled after Robert Watt's *Bibliotheca Britannica*,⁴⁰ but he was killed in the next year. Henry Stevens, London bookseller and son of the founder of the Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society, proposed to the Smithsonian Institution in 1848 a plan for publishing a "Bibliographia Americana." Stevens obtained the financial support of James Lenox

³⁷N. G. Snelling to Isaiah Thomas, October 23, 1818. As quoted in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, note on p. 136.

³⁸*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1844, 1845*, p. 21.

³⁹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, in Boston, April 25, 1855, 1855*, p. 35.

⁴⁰*Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin* . . . (Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society, VIII [1901]), 281-282.

and others, yet he made no substantial progress in the work. In 1859, when Joseph Sabin announced in the *Historical Magazine* his projected "Bibliographical Dictionary," there was still no comprehensive guide to the wealth of publications about America.⁴¹

The Massachusetts Historical Society published four catalogues before 1860. The first, a pamphlet of forty pages issued in 1796, records about a thousand titles in the library but does not include unbound books, pamphlets, newspapers and manuscripts. Among the more important titles are fourteen by Increase Mather and thirteen by Cotton Mather. The catalogue prepared by Dr. Timothy Alden and published in 1811 contains about 4,000 titles, including thirty-eight by the elder Mather and more than fifty by his son. Among the newspapers listed in an appendix is a long file of the important *Massachusetts Spy*. In 1856 the Boston society published a small edition of the *Catalogue of the Private Library of Thomas Dowse* for private distribution. Since the Dowse collection includes much general literature, this catalogue receives little attention from students of American history. The two volume *Catalogue of the Library...* published in 1859 was prepared by Assistant Librarian John Appleton, under the direction of an editorial committee. It contains numerous cross references and much more bibliographical detail than is to be found in the first two catalogues of the society. Here nine pages are required for listing the publications of the two Mathers.

The New York society issued three early publications which are called "catalogues." The first was prepared by Dr. Timothy Alden and appeared in 1813. As in his volume for the Boston institution, books are listed in one alphabet, and newspapers, charts, and the like are found in an appendix. The compiler's annotations deserve mention. For example, after the entry for the *Boston News Letter*, Dr. Alden commented, "It is

⁴¹V. H. Paltsits, "Proposal of Henry Stevens for a 'Bibliographia Americana' to the Year 1700, To Be Published by the Smithsonian Institution," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, XXXVI (1942), 245-266 *passim*. Cf., "Bibliography of American History," *The Historical Magazine*, I (March, 1859), 74-76.

hardly probable that another copy of the first newspaper printed in America so complete as this, which includes the 209 first numbers, is any where else in existence."⁴² The *Catalogue of Books, Manuscripts, & . . .* published in 1839 is simply a record of accessions received after George Folsom became librarian the year before. The names of donors are printed also, probably to encourage additional gifts to the library. Librarian George Henry Moore prepared the large *Catalogue of Printed Books* issued in 1859. It was then intended to prepare a second volume for manuscripts, maps, charts, and newspapers, but this was not done. The usefulness of this printed catalogue is attested by the fact that it is still used in the library of the New York Historical Society as the record of its early acquisitions.

Although the American Antiquarian Society voted in 1814 to print a catalogue and work was begun in 1817, none was published until 1837. The need for a printed catalogue was felt so keenly that each member of the organization was asked to contribute two dollars for its publication.⁴³ Librarian C. C. Baldwin compiled much of the catalogue, and the completed volume is "a monument of his untiring industry." During one period Baldwin regularly spent ten hours a day in its preparation.⁴⁴ The work lists approximately 12,000 books and more than 1,200 volumes of pamphlets. Each letter in the alphabet is paged separately to facilitate additions. However, the American Antiquarian Society did not take advantage of this scheme, for no supplement to its catalogue appeared.

The early catalogues of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Maryland Historical Society were of small value to general students of American history. The thirty-six page *Catalogue of the Library . . .* describes the books as they stood on the shelves of the Philadelphia association in 1849. Here volumes were classified as history, biography, and manuscripts and shelved in each section where convenient. Instead of entering

⁴²*Catalogue of the Books, Tracts, Newspapers, Maps, Charts, Views, Portraits, and Manuscripts, in the Library of the New-York Historical Society* (New-York: From the Press of J. Seymour, 1813), p. 128.

⁴³*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 228.

⁴⁴*Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin . . .*, p. 240.

a book under its author, it is listed in this catalogue according to its location in the library. This arbitrary arrangement and the inadequacies of the Philadelphia library in 1849 render its catalogue practically useless as a bibliographical tool. The catalogue of the Baltimore society published in 1854 describes manuscripts and not books. In this library the Gilmor and Maryland Proprietary and State Papers were kept as collections, and miscellaneous Maryland records were arranged chronologically in portfolios. A general description of the contents of a portfolio is almost worthless to a historian who cannot use the material. The uniqueness of a manuscript necessitates verbatim printing, or at least abstracting, if it is to be used widely.

There was great variation in the frequency, location, and attendance of the regular meetings of the early historical associations. Monthly and quarterly meetings were common, but one society met weekly or semi-monthly and several only annually.⁴⁵ In sparsely populated regions some meetings were scheduled to coincide with governmental activities, such as a court session, to increase attendance.⁴⁶ If a society had a home, meetings were usually held therein, yet half of those of the Worcester association were held in Boston. Organizations without fixed abodes gathered wherever convenient. The Newark association held annual meetings in Trenton and quarterly sessions in other New Jersey towns. Attendance at regular meetings was seldom large, and many associations often found it difficult to attract a quorum. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft had observed this situation so frequently in eastern societies that he proposed to the young Detroit association that Michigan territorial officers be ex-officio members to insure a regular quorum.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Henry Barnard, "An Account of the Connecticut Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XIII (February, 1841), 288; and *Proceedings of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois . . .* (Edwardsville: Printed by Robert K. Fleming, 1828), p. 5.

⁴⁶"Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 10-11.

⁴⁷Henry Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes . . .* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., (1851), p. 329.

Although meetings of historical societies were held primarily for the transaction of business, they became important mediums for the dissemination of historical information. Infrequent meetings devoted to "a mere routine of records, reports, and elections" held little interest for members, so steps were taken to widen their appeal. Committees were named and members were encouraged to present regularly for discussion questions in the field of American history,⁴⁸ and programs including reports of historical investigations were favorably considered.⁴⁹ At least one society delegated the supervision of routine administrative affairs to an executive committee in order to free time in meetings for matters of greater interest,⁵⁰ and several recommended that discussions of historical subjects be open to the public.⁵¹

Many organizations encouraged social activities to keep the interest of members. A special committee of the New York association suggested that refreshments be served at meetings, and the adoption of the proposal proved beneficial.⁵² Members of the Baltimore society enjoyed their "monthly soirees." A chess room was open for their daily use and newspapers were provided in a periodical room. "Every comfort" was extended to members of the Maryland Historical Society who chose to make its building "a resort."⁵³

It is probable that several local associations in Ohio had more social than historical appeal, for descriptions of their gatherings suggest camp meetings or country fairs. Hon. John Sherman's address in Milan before the Fire Lands Historical

⁴⁸New York Historical Society, Minutes, February 4, 1840; and *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, p. 269.

⁴⁹New York Historical Society, Minutes, October 4, 1842; *Annual Report of the President of the Maryland Historical Society, . . . 1850, [1850]*, p. 4; and *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, in Boston, April 27, 1853 . . . , [1853?]*, p. 9.

⁵⁰*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1844, 1845*, p. 18.

⁵¹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society in Boston, April 27, 1853*, p. 9; and *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1856-1859, VIII, (1859)*, 35.

⁵²New York Historical Society, Minutes, October 4, 1842; and *Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1844, 1845*, p. 18.

⁵³*Annual Report of the President of the Maryland Historical Society, 1854, [1854]*, p. 8; and *Annual Report . . . , 1858, [1858]*, p. 8.

Society attracted an "army of wagons, carriages and vehicles of every name and style," and the hall in which he spoke was so crowded that "every foot of standing room was occupied."⁵⁴ Before Hon. Elisha Whittlesey delivered his address before the Norwalk association on November 12, 1857, the members sang "Auld Lang Syne," and at a meeting in Birmingham those present visited "well filled tables spread under beautiful shades" where they "partook of the ample collation" provided by townspeople.⁵⁵ The Historical Society of Cuyahoga County sponsored in 1858 a grand picnic at which Hon. R. P. Spalding of Cleveland was the principal speaker. This event, attended by an estimated five thousand people, was so popular that two years later a second celebration was held, "which was in every way as successful as the first."⁵⁶

Historical information was communicated also by means of lectures, a regular feature in many early societies. Numerous addresses were published, but few are pleasing to modern tastes. Many are akin to Andrew Wylie's discourse delivered before the Indiana Historical Society, which Griffin characterized as "a rather rambling address on the uses of history—nothing local, or even in reference to America."⁵⁷ A few, such as J. H. Perkins' address before the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, are well organized and deserve better than the neglect they receive. One lecture delivered before an association ordinarily had no relation to another, but in the Historical Society of Michigan each annual address was devoted to an era in the history of the region. Had these continued, an early history of Michigan would have resulted.

Chiefly to raise money several historical societies located in populous cities conducted extensive series of lectures. During the winter of 1833-34 the Massachusetts Historical Society sponsored twelve addresses in the Athenæum Lecture Room. In-

⁵⁴*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, I (November, 1858), 3-4.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, I (June, 1858), 31; and II (September, 1861), 2.

⁵⁶C. C. Baldwin, *Notice of Historical and Pioneer Societies in Ohio* (Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society Tract No. 27 [1875]), p. 5.

⁵⁷A. P. C. Griffin, *Bibliography of American Historical Societies* (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1905, II [1907]), 199.

cluded were "The Treason of Arnold," by Jared Sparks, "The Origin of Puritanism," by George Bancroft, and the "Progress of American Periodical Literature," by John G. Palfrey. Fourteen lectures under the auspices of the Boston society in the winter of 1835-36 netted \$616, and a series given at the Masonic Temple in 1836-37 yielded \$211.83.⁵⁸ The Rhode Island Historical Society attempted to fill its treasury and awaken public interest in its objects by conducting lectures during the winters of 1834-35 and 1835-36. The result "in a pecuniary point of view was small," but the goodwill created persisted for some years.⁵⁹ The New York Historical Society realized sufficient income from a series of lectures held in 1838 to free itself of a heavy debt, and a second series in the following year was even more profitable.⁶⁰ In 1841 Jared Sparks delivered before the society a course of lectures on the history of the American Revolution. Tickets for admission were sold to men for two dollars, to ladies for one dollar, and a family ticket was available for five dollars. Daniel Webster's address before the New York institution on February 23, 1852, attracted unusual interest. Individuals asked for as many as ten tickets and traveled from as far as Rochester to hear the famous orator.

A number of associations called attention to memorable dates and places in the history of their localities. The New Hampshire Historical Society was formed in conjunction with the second centennial of the settlement of the state,⁶¹ and the Essex Historical Society held annual meetings on September 6 in commemoration of the landing of Governor John Endicott at Salem in 1628.⁶² In the fifties the Historical Society of Pennsyl-

⁵⁸*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, note on p. 478; and *Proceedings . . . , 1835-1855*, pp. 34 and 80.

⁵⁹W. R. Staples, "An Account of the Rhode Island Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XI (May, 1839), 367.

⁶⁰George Folsom, "Historical Sketch of the New-York Historical Society," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, Second Series, I (1841), 468-469.

⁶¹"Sketch of the Formation of the New-Hampshire Historical Society," *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society . . .*, I (1824), v-vi.

⁶²*An Historical Notice of the Essex Institute . . .* (Salem: Printed by the Institute, 1865), p. 5.

vania conducted pilgrimages to historic spots in the vicinity of Philadelphia and held commemorative banquets and addresses in nearby towns.⁶³ In order to preserve every bit of local history, the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society marked an extraordinarily high tide by driving an iron bolt into a prominent rock.⁶⁴

The larger societies held impressive celebrations in honor of important historic events. Those arranged by the Massachusetts Historical Society include one in 1792 to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America and another in 1843 to mark the second centennial of the old New England Confederation. Jeremy Belknap spoke at the former, and John Quincy Adams delivered an address at the latter. In 1809 the New York Historical Society held elaborate ceremonies in honor of Henry Hudson's exploration two centuries before. This was no tedious affair, for the celebrants drank more than thirty toasts during the evening.⁶⁵ More formal was the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the first inauguration of President Washington. A large number of public officials and representatives of other societies heard J. Q. Adams' discourse, *The Jubilee of the Constitution*, which fills 115 printed pages.

Five years later former President Adams attended the celebration of the New York Historical Society on the fortieth anniversary of its establishment. Members and their guests met in the rooms of the society at five in the afternoon and walked in a procession to the Church of the Messiah where they listened to an address by John Romeyn Brodhead, who had copied important New York papers in foreign archives. At eight dinner was served to three hundred gentlemen including the former President, President Nathaniel Moore of Columbia College, leading clergymen and jurists, and representatives of other historical societies. "A better convocation of learning and talents has sel-

⁶³Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Pennsylvania: Published by the Society, 1940), I, 247.

⁶⁴William Orcutt, *Good Old Dorchester. A Narrative of the History of the Town, 1630-1893* (Cambridge: Published by the Author, 1893), p. 199.

⁶⁵New York Historical Society, Minutes, September 4, 1809.

dom been seen in New York, nor was there ever more or better speaking." President Albert Gallatin presided, John Quincy Adams sat on his right, and General Juan Almonte, the Mexican minister, on his left. In the words of Philip Hone, a vice-president of the association:

It was a glorious sight to see the two octogenarians, Mr. Gallatin and Mr. Adams, side by side, with heads white as snow and full of knowledge; these two stars who shone together formerly in the fiery heat of opposing politics, shooting hostile flames at each other, now mingling their waning lights to illumine the path of science, and gilding with their declining rays the hours of rational festivity.⁶⁶

⁶⁶*The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851* (Edited by Bayard Tuckerman; New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1899), II, 237.

VIII

Publications

THE SAME factors which caused the early historical societies to protect and arrange their collections and to sponsor lectures and commemorations induced them to publish historical information. The sentiment of the New York Historical Society, "the surest way to preserve a record is to multiply the copies,"¹ was repeated elsewhere as a reason for extensive publishing activities. The significant role of printing in the spread of historical knowledge was a second reason for the reproduction of documents. Indeed, one institution believed an ambitious publishing program was the best way "to disseminate as widely as possible the historical information it may gather..."² The dual capacity of a publication to preserve and to diffuse the materials of history was clear to the founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society, for they declared, "There is no sure way of preserving historical records and materials, but by *multiplying the copies*. *** Impressed with this idea, the members of the HISTORICAL SOCIETY have determined, not only to collect, but to *diffuse* the various aspects of historical information, which are within their reach."³

Motivated by these purposes American historical societies published more than five hundred separate works before the Civil War. This activity was participated in by all except ten

¹*Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, I (1811), iv.

²*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1850-1851*, V (1851), 40.

³"Introductory Address from the Historical Society," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, I (1792), 3.

short-lived organizations. However, in no field was the dominance of large institutions more apparent, for ten societies issued about three-fourths of the titles. Five of the ten, the American Antiquarian Society, and the state associations of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, published more than the total of the other fifty. Less than a fourth of all the publications contain more than eighty pages, and these came from seventeen organizations. The institutions in Boston, New York, Newark, and Philadelphia issued at least two-thirds of the longer works.

The first publication of a historical society was usually an introductory circular which stated the objects of the new organization. Therein were often printed the constitution, by-laws, and roster of officers and members, and a number include the text of an address delivered before the founders. The titles of most of the initial publications, which seldom contain more than a few dozen pages, are listed in Griffin's excellent *Bibliography of American Historical Societies*. Because of the rarity of these pamphlets, few have been used by students of American history.

The best known volumes of historical associations are their Collections, also called Transactions or Memoirs. In general these are sizeable books made up of texts of manuscripts, reprints of rare publications, and diverse historical materials. About ninety such were published before 1861, of which more than a third came from the Massachusetts Historical Society. The remainder was issued chiefly by state institutions in New England and the Middle Atlantic States. Southern organizations in Charleston and Savannah each published three volumes of *Collections*, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin prepared four *Reports and Collections* between 1855 and 1859. Few local associations undertook publications of this type. The Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society distributed three pamphlets which are called "Collections," and the Ulster Historical Society issued in 1860 the first part of a large volume of historical papers.

Less than a year after its establishment the Massachusetts Historical Society arranged to publish historical material in the weekly *American Apollo*. Contributions of the association were

printed in separate signatures, which could be removed easily from the rest of the issue. This means of publication was begun January 6, 1792, and continued for thirty-nine weeks, after which separate monthly parts were issued until 1795, when they were succeeded by quarterly issues. The weekly, monthly, and quarterly publications of the Boston association from 1792 to 1798 comprise the first five volumes of its first series of *Collections*. Three series of ten volumes each and four volumes of a fourth series were published before the Civil War. All volumes in the first two series and the first in the third series have been reprinted, and the *Collections* published in 1792 and 1798 have been printed three times.

The first thirty-four volumes of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* are indispensable to American historians. Each contains some work of merit, and many are of superlative importance. Daniel Gookin's "Historical Collections of the Indians in New England" was printed from manuscript in the first volume (1792), and Rev. John Eliot's "Ecclesiastical History of Massachusetts" appeared in the seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh (1801-1814). A *General History of New England* by William Hubbard was published in two volumes of *Collections* in 1815. If the society had done nothing more than print this work, commented a leading review, "it would have conferred a lasting obligation on the community."⁴ *Collections* published after 1820 and before 1860 contain much which is the basis of New England colonial history. Outstanding are the papers of Governor Hutchinson issued in 1823 and 1825 and Governor William Bradford's priceless record of Plymouth colony to 1647. Bradford's manuscript, which had been frequently quoted by colonial writers, was lost in the Revolution and found in England under singular circumstances in 1855. A copy of the document was secured by the Boston society and published with notes by Silas Deane in its *Collections* in 1856. Here, for the first time, the *History of Plymouth Plantation* was available to a historian in the United States.

The nine volumes of *Collections* published by the New York society before the Civil War have considerable interest for his-

⁴*The North American Review*, XLIV (January, 1837), 261.

torians of that state. In the first the Voyages of Henry Hudson collected by Samuel Purchas were reprinted because of the scarcity of the original edition. The next two (1814 and 1821) include anniversary and inaugural addresses delivered by DeWitt Clinton, Samuel Mitchell, Gulian C. Verplanck, Gouverneur Morris, and other leaders of the association. Although selected for publication, the addresses have little importance for general students. William Smith's important *History of the Late Province of New York*, part of which had not been printed, forms the fourth and fifth volumes (1826 and 1829). The society believed that the publication of this work was alone justification for financial assistance from the legislature.⁵ The next volume of the *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, the first of the second series, contains a number of documents which illustrate the development of New Amsterdam. These were edited by Librarian George Folsom, who even revised the translations printed. Volumes two and three of the second series (1849 and 1851) contain miscellaneous material about New York in the colonial period. Here are a translation and a memoir by John Romeyn Brodhead and two communications from George Bancroft. The *Catalogue of the Library* . . . referred to in an earlier chapter makes up the last of the nine volumes.

The first two volumes of *Archæologia Americana. Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* treat principally of the Indian. Caleb Atwater's survey of aboriginal remains in the West is the major paper in the first volume (1820), and Albert Gallatin's "A Synopsis of the Indian Tribes of North America" dominates the second (1836). Other writers had investigated various Indian languages, but Gallatin was the first to describe the family relationships in their dialects. Also in this volume is Daniel Gookin's "An Historical Account of the Doings and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England . . ." A copy of Gookin's manuscript was furnished by Jared Sparks and annotated by Samuel G. Drake, whose *Book of the Indians* was a standard work on the subject.

Important materials for colonial history left no space for Indian papers in the third and fourth volumes of *Archæologia*

⁵*Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, IV (1829), v.

Americana. Frequent use had damaged the original records of the Massachusetts Bay Company and Colony, and the Worcester society believed that they should be protected from further mutilation and loss by publication. A transcript was carefully prepared by David Pulsifer and Joseph B. Felt, author of a *Historical Account of Massachusetts Currency*, and notes illustrative of persons and events mentioned in the original were furnished by Librarian Samuel F. Haven. The last volume of . . . *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* published before the Civil War contains documents from the State Paper Office about Sir Walter Raleigh's colony on Roanoke Island and a reprint of *New England's Rarities Discovered* by John Josselyn. These and other lengthy contributions prevented the inclusion of articles on sacrificial mounds in the Scioto Valley and Indian dialects.

The first six volumes of the *Collections of the Maine Historical Society* emphasize local history. A request in the first volume (1831) for biographical sketches, descriptions of towns, and records of settlement elicited many such contributions. Each volume contains some information about Maine communities, and several include lengthy local histories. The "Pemaquid Papers" in the fifth volume (1857) were copied from New York archives at the expense of the state of Maine. William Willis, first corresponding secretary and sixth president of the organization, was the chief contributor to its early *Collections*. A 247 page "History of Portland," two addresses, and studies of the language of the Abenakis and Scotch-Irish immigration all came from his pen.

An unusual feature of the *Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society* issued before 1860 is the unity of each volume. Although the organization planned to publish "all those works of the early settlers in Rhode-Island, which contain materials relating to the history of the State,"⁶ each of the five books is restricted to a single subject. The first (1827), as is to be expected, is devoted to Roger Williams, and the second (1835) is concerned mainly with another rebel, Samuel Gorton. Elisha R. Potter's record of early Narragansett forms the third volume

⁶*Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society*, II (1835), 5.

(1835), and John Callender's *An Historical Discourse*, with notes and a memoir of the author by Professor Romeo Elton, is in the fourth (1838). The *Annals of the Town of Providence* by William R. Staples fills the 670 pages of the last volume of the series (1843).

The *Collections* issued by the New Hampshire Historical Society between 1824 and 1850 are exceedingly miscellaneous in character. Commendable town histories appear in all six volumes, and biographical sketches of the graduates of Dartmouth and Harvard are in the third (1832) and fourth (1834) respectively. Of more general interest are the articles on the history of education in New Hampshire, the preservation of public archives, and the use of documents in the writing of history. These *Collections* also contain texts of manuscripts, memoirs of deceased members, addresses before the association, and mortality tables for several New Hampshire towns. John Farmer, antiquarian and first corresponding secretary of the Concord society, contributed to three and assisted in the preparation of four of these varied volumes.

The early *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* contain a number of important documents and several original investigations in the cultural history of the state. Among the noteworthy papers of the first class are Thomas Holm's *A Short Description of the Province of New Sweden*, translated by Peter S. Du Ponceau, a catalogue of Pennsylvania documents in the State Paper Office, and an account of Braddock's expedition, edited from manuscripts by Winthrop Sargent. The studies of Pennsylvania colonial literature by Thomas I. Wharton and Joshua Fisher and the history of the University of Pennsylvania by George B. Wood belong to the second class. Although the plan to publish the *Memoirs* in semi-annual parts was not carried out, seven volumes of the series were issued between 1826 and 1860. In addition, an eighth volume of miscellaneous material was published in 1853 as the first of the *Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*.

The historical society in New Jersey was the last north of Maryland and east of the Appalachians to issue an important

series of Collections before the Civil War. Like the early *Collections* of the Providence society, each of the five volumes of the Newark organization was devoted to a separate subject. The first (1846) treats of the early history of East Jersey and the third (1849) of the provincial courts. The characters and papers of the Earl of Stirling and Governor Lewis Morris occupy the entire second (1847) and fourth (1852) volumes respectively. The last (1858) contains the important index to New Jersey documents in the State Paper Office compiled by Henry Stevens. This work was carefully edited by Corresponding Secretary William A. Whitehead, who also was the chief contributor to the volume published in 1846.

The *Collections* issued in the forties and fifties by the historical societies in Georgia and South Carolina are useful to historians of those states. Nine pamphlets about Georgia before 1745 are reprinted in the first two books (1840 and 1842) of the Savannah institution, and a description of the Creek country at the end of the eighteenth century by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins forms the only part of volume three published before 1860. In each of the first three volumes of *Collections* of the Charleston association appears a portion of a lengthy list and abstract of South Carolina documents in English archives. Also important in these books are the papers which relate to Henry Laurens' imprisonment in the Tower of London and the journals of the first and second Councils of Safety for South Carolina.

The Wisconsin organization published the only important series of Collections issued before the Civil War by a Western historical society. No volumes were prepared before Lyman Draper became secretary in 1852, but four were ready before the end of the decade. These contain pioneer reminiscences, local histories, sketches of Indian tribes and mounds, and articles on place names and public libraries in Wisconsin. Many of the original contributions were prepared at the request of the society. It is noteworthy that two volumes of the Madison institution are the only Collections of any early American historical society in a foreign language. Its four *Reports and Collections* were published in English, but the second was printed in German also, and both the second and third were translated into Norwegian.

Several associations published periodicals with contents similar to those of the Collections described. The monthly *American Pioneer*, published at Chillicothe and Cincinnati in 1842 and 1843 by the Logan Historical Society, was the first of this type. It was begun "with scarce subscribers enough to pay for paper"⁷ but was sustained for almost two years by its editor, Corresponding Secretary John S. Williams. Since the *Pioneer* was devoted to the objects of the Logan Historical Society, the collection and preservation of materials for future historians, its pages include much of interest to students of Western history. A second Ohio local organization, the Fire Lands Historical Society, published a quarterly historical magazine, the *Fire Lands Pioneer*. This was designed to preserve information known by early settlers, and a number of local histories contributed by them appear in the first and second volumes (1858-1861). The periodical is still published by the Firelands Historical Society at Norwalk.

The quarterly *Virginia Historical Register* and its successor, the irregular *Virginia Historical Reporter*, were published by the Richmond institution from 1848 until 1860 to serve as organs of communication with members and to preserve information about the development of the state. The eight small volumes printed contain the proceedings of twelve annual meetings and considerable material about the colonial history of Virginia. Early numbers of the *Register* include the texts of numerous documents, but these were not enjoyed by readers.⁸ More space was given in the *Reporter* to addresses and articles on Virginia history, such as Hugh Grigsby's long study of the Convention of 1829-30.

The need felt in some institutions for closer relationship with members and the public caused them to issue detailed accounts of their activities. Here the American Antiquarian Society led the way by printing the first of its long series of semi-annual *Proceedings* in 1843. This was done to "bring the existence and

⁷John S. Williams, Cincinnati, to W. W. Leland, February 26, 1842. MS in Draper correspondence in the library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁸*The Virginia Historical Register*, V (1852), v.

purposes of the Society directly before the public mind and awaken an interest in its pursuits.”⁹ Annual *Proceedings* were issued by the New York Historical Society from 1843 to 1847, when “in order to preserve and extend its beneficial influence” the organization instituted a short-lived monthly bulletin.¹⁰ Thirteen numbers of the *Bulletin of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* were published between 1845 and 1847, and the still current quarterly *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* began in 1847. Each contains the reports of an institution and a number of brief historical articles. In 1858 the Massachusetts Historical Society voted to publish selections of “general interest” from its proceedings,¹¹ and in the next year appeared a volume for 1855-58. No American historical society published its non-current records before the Civil War. Not until 1878-80 did the Boston organization publish *Proceedings* for its first sixty-five years, and the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* was not in print until 1912.

The first sixty-five historical societies in the United States published numerous pamphlets and volumes in addition to their introductory circulars, Collections, and Proceedings. Announcements and lists of members were distributed by many institutions. Several printed their library catalogues for reasons discussed above, and others, notably the Maryland Historical Society, issued descriptions of art exhibitions. Discourses delivered before the associations were printed also, but few deserve special notice. Certain of the more important, such as the *Historical Account of Massachusetts Currency* by Joseph B. Felt and *Old New York* by Dr. John W. Francis, were revised and enlarged before publication. Although it was generally maintained that “the office of a Historical Society is not to write

⁹*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 458.

¹⁰New York Historical Society, Report of Committee on the Expediency of Publishing a Monthly Bulletin, February 3, 1846. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

¹¹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1858-1860, 1860*, pp. 7, 51.

history, but to gather the proper materials and preserve them,"¹² the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society appointed a committee to prepare a finished history. The completed work, a 670 page record of the town of Dorchester, is still frequently referred to by students of Massachusetts history.

The principal shortcomings of these pre-Civil War historical publications were apparent to contemporaries. Above all else the volumes were intended to be "*lumber-yards of history*,"¹³ and this emphasis produced some accumulations of "disjointed fragments" which possess little merit or appeal. The Virginia Historical Society considered such works "repulsive" and proposed a chronological arrangement of subject matter for the improvement of its own.¹⁴ The futility of presenting varied historical information in books without indexes was voiced in the *Historical Magazine*,¹⁵ and Peter S. Du Ponceau, president of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, strongly disapproved of volumes of dry facts and documents. In his opinion the publications of a historical society should be "as interesting as possible to the general reader" and should possess "a literary, and . . . *popular* character, by which means they will be more generally read, and more extensively diffused."¹⁶

The major publications circulated widely. By 1811 the first ten volumes of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* were well known to foreign scholars,¹⁷ and the *Pioneer History* distributed by the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio attracted favorable attention in libraries in the United

¹²*Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* . . . , IV (1859), 45.

¹³The term was used in this connection in *The American Pioneer*, II (September, 1843), 400; and in the *Third Annual Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, for the Year 1856*, III (1857), iii.

¹⁴*The Virginia Historical Register*, I (1848), 9.

¹⁵III (December, 1859), 368-369.

¹⁶"An Inaugural Discourse, Delivered on the Third of June, 1837 . . .," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, I, Part I (1840), 15.

¹⁷*Catalogue of the Books, Pamphlets, Newspapers, Maps, Charts, Manuscripts, &c., in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: From the Press of John Eliot, Jun., 1811), p. iv.

States and abroad.¹⁸ Copies of all important works were sent to other institutions in exchange for works received or expected. This method of distribution consumed many copies of every edition, but it does not explain the rapidity with which a number of titles went out of print. Twenty-three volumes of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* were reprinted before 1860, the entire edition of *East Jersey under the Proprietary Government* was used up within four years,¹⁹ and no copy of the only work of the North Carolina organization could be obtained in 1854.²⁰ Even more surprising is the fact that a second edition of Judge John Law's address before the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society was required in 1858 because the two thousand copies printed in 1839 had long been exhausted.²¹

The preparation of more than five hundred printed works tried the strength of the fifty-five organizations concerned. Difficulties with authors and printers probably were frequent, but examples are few. After the New York Historical Society refused to publish separately a memoir prepared by its first president, Judge Egbert Benson, he in a display of bad temper asked for the return of a donation of books. Thereupon the association returned the books and voted that no further action be taken in the matter.²² The first *Transactions* of the Alabama society were published with "some very awkward typographical errors," because the printer protested that corrections made in proofs gave him "double trouble"!²³ The charges for printing loomed large to all organizations. The publication of a volume of *Archæologica*

¹⁸"Report of the Historical Society of Ohio, for 1849," W. D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West . . .* (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 75.

¹⁹*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, pp. 40-41.

²⁰Charles Phillips, Chapel Hill, to the American Antiquarian Society, March 4, 1854. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the society.

²¹John Law, *The Colonial History of Vincennes . . .* (Vincennes: Harvey, Mason & Co., 1858), p. v.

²²New York Historical Society, Minutes, August 12 and October 17, 1817. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

²³Basil Manly to Alexander Bowie, February 23, 1852. As quoted in Thomas Owen, "Dr. Basil Manly, the Founder of the Alabama Historical Society," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, 1899-1903*, IV (1904), 134.

Americana in 1836 cost the Worcester society more than \$1,000,²⁴ and the edition of Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation* required an expenditure of \$1,150 by the Massachusetts Historical Society²⁵ Such sums were, of course, prohibitive to less wealthy institutions, and it is a wonder that they were able to publish anything of consequence.

Various means were employed to defray publication expenses. The sale of a work of a historical society was seldom equal to its cost. Even the 531 subscribers pledged to the *Fire Lands Pioneer* were too few, for a sale of one thousand copies was necessary to secure the periodical against loss.²⁶ The costs of publishing were usually borne by members, but the arrangement was not a happy one. The printer of the third volume of *Collections* of the New York Historical Society understood that each member would purchase a copy, but this was not done and the proceeds were disappointing.²⁷ The scheme of the New Jersey Historical Society to send issues of its *Proceedings* to every member and charge those who did not return them also failed. Members refused to accept the publication from postmasters, and these copies were probably sold as waste paper.²⁸ A few fortunate institutions received public assistance in their publishing enterprises. The state of South Carolina subsidized the first three volumes of the Charleston organization, and various works of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin were issued by the state printer.

To stabilize their publishing ventures the more prosperous societies established publication funds. In 1854 the Historical Society of Pennsylvania provided that any person, member or other, who should pay twenty dollars into the treasury should receive during his lifetime a copy of every publication of the in-

²⁴*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 343.

²⁵*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1855-1858, 1859*, p. 90.

²⁶*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, I (June, 1858), 47, and II (March, 1860), 2.

²⁷E. Bliss and E. White, New York, to David Hosack, December 8, 1822. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁸*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1848-1849*, III (1849), 4; and *Proceedings . . . , 1853-1855*, VII (1855), 2-3.

stitution. By 1860 about 655 individuals had contributed \$15,000, and with the interest therefrom three volumes of *Memoirs*, including Braddock's important *History of an Expedition*, had been issued.²⁹ The goal of six thousand dollars set by the Committee on Publication Fund of the American Antiquarian Society was reached in 1857,³⁰ and one year later the New York Historical Society resolved to obtain twenty-five thousand dollars by the sale of one thousand scrip shares at twenty-five dollars each.³¹ A share entitled its holder to interest at five per cent until the fund was reasonably complete and thereafter one copy of every publication made at its expense. The first volume in the "Publication Fund Series" appeared in 1868.

A number of societies unable to support their own publications succeeded in utilizing the printing press for the preservation and diffusion of historical information. Proceedings of the meetings of young associations in all sections of the country appeared in local newspapers and periodicals, and the assistance of editors was a subject of frequent, special appeals.³² Societies not in a position to finance separate historical works sponsored those of individuals. The Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio introduced S. P. Hildreth's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs*, and W. S. Porter's *Historical Notices of Connecticut* was "published under the patronage of the Connecticut Historical Society." This organization appointed a committee to review a manuscript history of the Indian tribes of Connecticut. The work received the approval of the group and was then issued under the "patronage" of the Hartford association.³³

²⁹Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1940), I, 233; and *List of Subscribers to the Publication Fund of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: 1860), p. 1.

³⁰*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society . . . , October 21, 1856, 1856*, pp. 66-67; and *Proceedings . . . , October 21, 1857, 1857*, p. 4.

³¹New York Historical Society, *Circular to Members, 1864* [New York: 1864], p. 2.

³²See, for example, [William Stanard,] "History of the Virginia Historical Society," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXIX, (October, 1931), 297; and "Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 34.

³³John De Forest, *History of the Indians of Connecticut from the Earliest Known Period to 1850* (Hartford: Wm. Hamersley, 1851), p. iii.

The early societies not only printed numerous historical papers, but they were directly responsible for the publication of several important works by other agencies. In its third volume of *Archæologica Americana* the American Antiquarian Society published a part of the records of the Company of Massachusetts Bay and noted that the originals were in danger of destruction. Thereupon the Commonwealth of Massachusetts continued the work of the Worcester organization and printed the complete records of the colonial company.³⁴ The same society intended to include in its *Transactions* a report of the researches made among Indian mounds in Wisconsin by Dr. Increase Lapham, but the Smithsonian Institution desired to issue the paper. Although Dr. Lapham's investigations had been financed by the American Antiquarian Society, the Washington institution was permitted to publish his results.³⁵ The Smithsonian also printed a Dakota lexicon which had been announced for publication by the Minnesota Historical Society. The manuscript of this work was probably relinquished without regret, because the St. Paul association had no regular publication fund.³⁶

It is perhaps noteworthy that the non-existence of a historical society was also responsible for the publication of a historical periodical! Several attempts to form a historical society in Pittsburgh had failed, yet Neville B. Craig, corresponding secretary of the defunct Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, did not despair of preserving the records of the development of the region. Craig published *The Olden Time; a Monthly Publication Devoted to the Preservation of Documents, and Other Authentic Information in Relation to . . . the Country around the Head of the Ohio*, because he believed it to be "the best substitute which could be devised for a spirited and energetic Historical Society."³⁷

³⁴*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, in Boston, April 30, 1856; and Worcester, Oct. 21, 1856, 1856, p. 10.*

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁶*Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society, for the Year A. D., 1850-1 . . . , 1851, pp. 142-143; and Annals . . . , 1852, [1852], p. 3.*

³⁷II (December, 1847), 572.

IX

Relationships among the Societies

IN HIS "Plan of an Antiquarian Society," drafted in 1790 before the establishment of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Jeremy Belknap wrote:

Letters shall be written to gentlemen in each of the United States, requesting them to form similar societies; and a correspondence shall be kept up between them for the purpose of communicating discoveries and improvements to each other.

Each Society through the United States shall be desired from time to time to publish such of their communications as they may judge proper; and all publications shall be made on paper and in pages of the same size, that they may be bound together; and each Society so publishing shall be desired to send gratuitously to each of the other Societies one dozen copies at least of each publication.¹

Co-operation among American historical societies did not develop as conceived by Jeremy Belknap, but it was a constant and important factor in their establishment and growth. Commonly a newly established society began the relationship by advising an older institution of its existence and asking for a donation of publications or other assistance. The reply of the older organization generally welcomed the new association and stated what aid could be given to it. For example, the New York Historical Society in its first communication to the Kentucky

¹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835, I* (1879), xii-xiii.

Historical Society advised that its publications were being presented and concluded with an effusion of good-will.²

The relations of several older societies towards new institutions were standardized by the adoption of resolutions defining their position. In 1822 the American Antiquarian Society instructed its corresponding secretary to inform historical societies in the United States of the "cordiality of feeling which exists toward them on the part of the American Antiquarian Society and its readiness to coöperate with them in effecting the objects of their several institutions, and of reciprocating with them their several publications..."³ Seventeen years later the New York Historical Society authorized its corresponding secretary, whenever he was informed officially of the organization of similar societies in this or other countries, "to transmit to them copies of the publications of this Society—."⁴ The executive board of the Providence institution did not wait for instructions before acting in such situations but communicated with new historical societies as soon as their existence was known.⁵

The assistance of established institutions was frequently enlisted even before a society was organized. A promoter of the Historical Society of Ohio, which was incorporated on February 1, 1822, but never organized, solicited a copy of the rules and regulations of the Massachusetts Historical Society and an outline of its views and purposes to be used as guides in the formation of the western association.⁶ Before the founding of the Maryland Historical Society, Brantz Mayer obtained copies of all the constitutions of historical societies he could secure by correspondence and was thereby enabled to present a carefully drafted document at the first meeting of the Baltimore institu-

²Copy of letter dated August 15, 1839, in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 176.

⁴New York Historical Society, Minutes, December 10, 1839. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

⁵*Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Rhode-Island Historical Society, . . . 1839, [1839], p. 5.*

⁶A Bradford, Boston, to Abiel Holmes, August, 1822. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

tion.⁷ Rev. Dr. Basil Manly, president of the University of Alabama, requested from the New York Historical Society "documentary guides" which would direct the formation of a historical association in his state,⁸ and Abraham Lincoln's law partner wrote in 1842 to the Massachusetts Historical Society for information about that institution, for he designed to form a similar organization in Springfield.⁹ Although Herndon believed this could "easily be done," the projected society was not organized.

Newly formed state historical societies did not delay in announcing their existence to established institutions. The Indiana Historical Society held its first meeting on December 11, 1830, and one week later it instructed its corresponding secretary to communicate with similar institutions in the country.¹⁰ The New Jersey Historical Society first met on January 13, 1845, and its corresponding secretary announced its organization to the New York Historical Society in a letter dated March 1, 1845.¹¹ Joshua H. Foster informed the New York organization of the formation of the Alabama Historical Society about five months after its first meeting,¹² and approximately the same number of months elapsed between the establishment of the Charleston society and its initial communication to a large northern association.¹³ Eastern institutions learned of the formation of the westernmost society established before the Civil War, the Historical Society of New Mexico, in letters written by its corre-

⁷Brantz Mayer, *History, Possessions and Prospects of the Maryland Historical Society* . . . (Maryland Historical Society, Fund-Publication, No. 1 [1867]), p. 6.

⁸Basil Manly, Tuscaloosa, to Luther Bradish, February 5, 1850. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁹William Herndon, Springfield, to the Massachusetts Historical Society, March 29, 1842. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the society.

¹⁰"Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 19.

¹¹W. A. Whitehead, Newark, to John Jay, March 1, 1845. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹²Joshua H. Foster, Tuscaloosa, to Luther Bradish, November 22, 1850. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹³William Rivers, Charleston, to Samuel Osgood, December 20, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

sponding secretary in less than six weeks after the first meeting at Santa Fé.¹⁴

The local organizations, perhaps unaware of their part in the collection, preservation, and diffusion of materials for the history of the United States, did not announce their establishment so promptly. Two years elapsed between the organization of the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society and the writing of its first letter to a large eastern institution,¹⁵ and the Red Jacket Historical Society did not address the New York Historical Society until after it had been organized for more than a year.¹⁶ The Newburgh Historical Society had been in existence almost two years before it sent its initial communication to the metropolitan organization,¹⁷ and the existence of the Iowa Historical and Geological Institute organized on December 18, 1843, was not communicated to the New York institution until May 22, 1846.¹⁸

The letters of new historical societies to the older institutions frequently contained appeals for special assistance. Soon after their establishment the Maryland Historical Society and the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina both asked the New York Historical Society for a list of the historical

¹⁴W. J. Sloan, Santa Fé, to E. A. Dalrymple, February 1, 1860. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

¹⁵George Gibson, Vincennes, to the New York Historical Society, January 25, 1841. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁶William Walker, Buffalo, to George Folsom, April 9, 1845. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

The fact that the New York organization received the first announcement of the establishment of many historical societies may be partly explained by a statement in this letter: "You must be aware, Sir, that the different Historical Societies in the country, look to the New York Historical Society, as the parent one of the whole—."

¹⁷G. C. Monell, Newburgh, to the New York Historical Society, April 13, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁸G. H. Hoit to John Jay, May 22, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

societies in the United States and the names of their secretaries.¹⁹ The New Jersey organization sought information from the New York Historical Society about what should be included in its charter,²⁰ and the Historical Society of Florida desired a copy of the constitution and a list of members of the older institution.²¹ The appeals were not all for information. The librarian of the young Kentucky Historical Society asked the New York Historical Society for city and state directories and the American Antiquarian Society for a set of its reports although he had nothing to send in exchange;²² and Rev. William Barry, the active secretary of the Chicago Historical Society, frankly stated to one eastern institution that the "extreme destitution" in his region of works of scientific and historical societies could not be remedied except by the benefactions of residents in older communities.²³

The relationships between established societies were ordinarily conducive to the development of good-will and historical research. In 1838 the executive committee of the American Antiquarian Society presented one volume of Governor Belcher's manuscript letters to the Massachusetts Historical Society because the Boston institution owned other volumes of his papers.²⁴ The New York and New Jersey societies unwittingly bid at an auction for the same pamphlet, which was sold to the Newark organization. After William Whitehead, secretary of the New

¹⁹Brantz Mayer to George Folsom, February 16, 1844; and Charles Phillips to John Jay, September 6, 1845. MSS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

Because of the numerous requests for a list of American historical societies and the names of their secretaries, the New York Historical Society printed the information in its *Proceedings* . . . , 1846, 1847, pp. 87-88.

²⁰D. V. McLean, Freehold, to John Jay, December 30, 1845. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²¹George Burt, St. Augustine, to the New York Historical Society, November 8, 1856. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²²Edward Jarvis, Louisville, to Frederic De Peyster, May 2, 1840; and to William Lincoln, March 25, 1840. MSS in files of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society.

²³William Barry to Samuel Osgood, April 30, 1856. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁴*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, II (1880), 99.

Jersey society, learned of the situation, he offered to relinquish the pamphlet if a copy could be made for his institution.²⁵ Romeo Elton, an officer of the Rhode Island Historical Society, transcribed an unpublished manuscript of Roger Williams for the American Antiquarian Society. In acknowledgment the librarian of the Worcester society permitted the Rhode Island institution to select from its duplicates any publications by Roger Williams not in the Providence collection.²⁶

It would be a mistake to conclude that all relationships among early historical societies were cordial, for such was not the case. The "jealousy" of members of the Boston association caused by the early success of the society at Worcester was "visible" to Dr. William Bentley, but this impression may have been caused by his not altogether happy relations with the older organization.²⁷ The Massachusetts Historical Society denied the requests of the Connecticut Historical Society and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for papers of Governor Trumbull and Governor Hutchinson respectively,²⁸ and the New Jersey Historical Society refused the request of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for portions of the manuscripts of Samuel Smith.²⁹ The formation of the Marietta Historical Association, according to its officers, had been planned three years before that of the Logan Historical Society, yet the latter was organized first. The scope of the two organizations appeared to the supporters of the Marietta Historical Association to overlap, and they did not hesitate to point this out to the rival society. After describing these circumstances, the officers of the Marietta Historical Association continued, "But there is no need of any marring of harmony."³⁰

²⁵W. A. Whitehead, Newark, to George H. Moore, November 9, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

²⁶*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 404.

²⁷*The Diary of William Bentley, D. D.* (Salem: The Essex Institute, 1905-1914), III, 381; and IV, 295.

²⁸*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, p. 357, note on pp. 436-441.

²⁹*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1853-1855*, VII (1855), 88.

³⁰*The American Pioneer*, I (May, 1842), 198-199.

None resulted because the societies were not very active and succumbed within a few years.

The ill feeling engendered in these situations was insignificant compared with that which existed between the Massachusetts Historical Society and the New England Historic-Genealogical Society in the fifties. The name of the latter, according to its claim, was the result of a machination in the legislature involving members of the historical society, and when the new organization sought to change its legal name to agree with its *Register*, the older institution obstructed the proceedings. The Massachusetts Historical Society presented to the General Court a memorial remonstrating against the change from New England Historic-Genealogical Society to New England Historical and Genealogical Society and induced aged Josiah Quincy to deliver an ungenerous address on the subject before a committee of the lawmakers. The measure was defeated, but the bitterness of the genealogical society did not soon disappear. Sixteen years later the controversy was reviewed in print, and it was stated that the historical society had been obliged by the presence of the genealogical society to make its collections accessible to the public and to widen its interests.³¹

American historical societies first became aware of the importance of concerted action in the late eighteen thirties when there were about twenty active organizations. On January 9, 1838, the New York society voted:

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to enquire into the expediency of holding in this City, during the ensuing Summer, a general meeting to be composed of delegates from all the historical and antiquarian Societies in the United States; with the view of promoting concert of action in the great work of historical research into matters connected with our own history.³²

³¹[S. G. Drake,] *Narrative Remarks, Expository Notes, and Historical Criticisms, on the New England Historical and Genealogical Society, and Incidentally on the Massachusetts Historical Society . . .* (Albany: Munsell, Printer, 1874), pp. 1-56, *passim*.

³²New York Historical Society, Minutes, January 9, 1838.

The proposed meeting was not held, but the resolution introduced a new era in the co-operation of historical societies. At its establishment in 1839 the Georgia Historical Society considered itself an "auxiliary" to the associations already formed,³³ and within a decade the council of the American Antiquarian Society considered the possibility that the Worcester organization might become an agency to unify the results of investigations of other societies.³⁴

The New York organization led in attempting to marshal the numerical strength of American historical societies. In 1846 the domestic corresponding secretary of the association recommended that the co-operation of similar institutions be sought to induce Congress to print additional volumes on scientific topics and to furnish copies without charge to learned institutions throughout the country. Nine societies signed the memorial on the subject submitted to Congress, but no legislative action was taken.³⁵ A second memorial prepared by the New York association "in favor of reducing the duties on foreign books, maps, and charts, and remonstrating especially against any abridgment of the privilege of importing books and other articles free of duty, now enjoyed by philosophical societies, colleges, academies, and schools," was supported by a number of historical societies, but it also went unnoticed by Congress.³⁶

The proposal of the New York Historical Society for the wider distribution of government publications did not lack merit, because in 1853 an official of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio complained that most of the societies in the country could not obtain copies of the important *American Archives*. Several hundred sets were stored in a building of the State Department, but they could not be released except by Congressional action. The western organization consequently

³³"Introduction," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), xii.

³⁴*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society . . . , in Worcester, October 23, 1849, 1850, p. 9.*

³⁵*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1846, 1847, pp. 69-70.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

asked large eastern societies to support its appeal for an advantageous disposition of the inaccessible volumes.³⁷

In 1858 the Wisconsin historical society drafted a memorial to Congress "for an appropriation of land to each of the several States for the exclusive benefit of their respective Historical and Antiquarian Societies."³⁸ Therein it was pointed out that very few of the institutions owned their own buildings and that all needed endowments for the purchase of historical materials and the pay of assistants. The plan was approved by some societies and objected to by others. The latter protested that the benefits would be inequitable, that such grants could be perverted to political purposes, and that the acceptance of same might jeopardize the independence of an institution.³⁹ The proposal was before Congress in November, 1858, when the bookseller Charles B. Norton offered his services as an agent to secure passage of the bill. "To do this, however," he wrote, "I must have the active cooperat[io]n of all the Societies and would visit them if necessary. ***My own belief is that I can work it through."⁴⁰ His fee was to be \$500 in advance and an additional \$500 if the bill became law. Norton was not retained by the historical societies, and the whole matter soon fell to the ground.

In no situation involving joint action did the early historical associations appear so absurd as they did in regard to the proposal made in 1845 by the New York Historical Society to change the national name of the country from America to Allegania, "pronounced Alganian."⁴¹ Irving had first suggested this use of the word as a convenience to poets and Americans traveling abroad. A committee of the society composed of David Dudley

³⁷Manning Force, Washington, to the New York Historical Society, January 7, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³⁸As quoted in *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1856-1859*, VIII (1859), 138.

³⁹William Barry, Chicago, to Lyman Draper, July 10, 1858. MS in correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁴⁰Charles Norton, Philadelphia, to Lyman Draper, November 18, 1858. MS in correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁴¹*Proceedings of the New York Historical Society, 1845, 1846*, pp. 21-22, 115-124, and 209-229. Cf., Homer Barnes, *Charles Fenno Hoffman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), pp. 160-165.

Field, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, and Charles Fenno Hoffman selected Alleghania because it was derived from the greatest natural feature of the country, it had many interesting historical associations, and its adoption would restore "one of the primordial titles of the aborigines." Copies of the lengthy report of the committee were then submitted to distinguished citizens and other societies for discussion and comment.

The most remarkable thing about the replies in favor of a change of name is the absence of humor. The Massachusetts Historical Society preferred Columbia to Alleghania, and Henry Clay wished that the United States might be called The Republic of Washington. William Gilmore Simms proposed Apalachia, and Joseph Story, although he considered any change unlikely, suggested Vesperia, from Vesper, which pertains to the West. Only Isaac Mickle was able to smile at the proceedings, for he wrote, "The United States of North America may do for the Secretary of the Treasury, the collector of customs and crier in the District Court, but for the relief of poets and orators, I go for Alleghania."

The objections made to a change in national name were numerous and varied. The American Antiquarian Society, for an obvious reason, suggested that America should not be lightly discarded, and Martin Van Buren, William H. Seward, and the historical societies of Vermont and Georgia considered the matter either impractical or unnecessary. The Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society considered the change of a name so long known inexpedient and tactfully added that if it were an original question what name should be chosen the society would approve of the choice of the New York association. The reply of the Maryland Historical Society was long and learned. Its secretary had investigated the origin and meaning of Alleghania and discovered that the "*character*" of the people who bore the name did not warrant its adoption by a great nation. The New Jersey Historical Society objected to the business for six reasons, the third of which was in the form of a query, "Where upon earth is the country which has received its name from its mountains?"

The sixth objection of the Newark association reads, "The object of Historical Societies is not to change the names of States

or Empires, but to aid in the writing, and in the preservation of all that pertains to, their true history." Strange as it may seem, this had not occurred to the New York Historical Society. The proposal to change the name of the country to Allegania occupied the organization throughout the year 1845. Even on January 6, 1846, when the resolutions offered by the committee on April 1, 1845, were put to a vote, the matter was not disposed of until after an "animated discussion," in which Philip Hone, David Dudley Field, and other leading members participated.

It is not surprising that twenty odd organizations with so many interests in common should have felt a need for a periodical which would contain regular reports of their activities. The earliest attempt to satisfy this need was made by the *American Pioneer*, which was published in Ohio in 1842 and 1843 to collect and preserve the records of the history of North America and those of the West in particular. Its editor, John S. Williams, corresponding secretary of the Logan Historical Society, placed the pages of the *Pioneer* at the disposal of any historical society in the country,⁴² but only the announcements of a few western associations appeared therein. The short life of the *American Pioneer* and its distance from the large eastern institutions kept the periodical from becoming the medium of communication needed by early historical societies.

In the first issue of the *Literary World* it was announced, "The notices of the movements of HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SOCIETIES, in a condensed summary of facts brought to light by them . . . will be well received by many readers."⁴³ Early numbers contained reports of proceedings of the New York Historical Society and various scientific institutions, and editor Charles Fenno Hoffman endeavored to secure contributions from other historical societies. Hoffman was aware that the *Literary World* would have increased value as a journal of reference if it contained summaries of the activities of all learned societies in the country.⁴⁴ As an inducement to report their proceedings, certain

⁴²*The American Pioneer*, I (August, 1842), 295.

⁴³I (February 6, 1847), 5.

⁴⁴C. F. Hoffman, New York, to Samuel Haven, July 24, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

societies received copies of the periodical free of charge.⁴⁵ Hoffman's successors in the editorship, the Duyckinck brothers, continued the policy of making the *Literary World* a clearing-house for learned institutions, and they solicited contributions from outstanding societies.⁴⁶ The *Literary World* was published only from 1847 until the end of 1853, but during these years it contained reports of many institutions, including historical organizations in Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island.

In the same year that the *Literary World* suspended, Wills De Hass and a group of scientific men planned to publish at Washington a "Monthly Historical and Ethnological Magazine," the want of which had "long been felt both at home and abroad."⁴⁷ The new magazine was to be the local organ of the National Institute and a central organ for historical and antiquarian societies in all parts of the country. It was part of the plan to publish a historical sketch of every society and regular reports of current proceedings. The first of three *Proceedings of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science* finally appeared in January, 1855, but the publication contains no important information about early historical organizations.⁴⁸

As historical societies became more numerous in the forties and early fifties, the need became greater for a regular medium of communication. The able superintendent of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin expressed his hope that Munsell in Albany or Van Norden of New York would publish such a work.⁴⁹ It was Draper's opinion that the periodical should be published

⁴⁵Osgood & Co., New York, to Brantz Mayer, August 11, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

⁴⁶E. A. Duyckinck, New York, to Brantz Mayer, February 22, 1849. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

⁴⁷Wills De Hass, Moundville, Va., to Samuel Haven, August 23, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

⁴⁸R. H. Haynes, Harvard College Library, to L. W. Dunlap, November 3, 1942.

⁴⁹Lyman Draper to George H. Moore, September 20, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

monthly and include the proceedings of each meeting of all the societies, lists of their publications, and the titles of all new publications relating to American history. In Boston also members of historical societies discussed the subject of establishing a monthly journal devoted entirely to history.⁵⁰ The consensus of historical societies in every section of the country was that "all seem to have felt the want of such a journal."⁵¹

The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America was published to supply this want. In the first issue, dated January, 1857, it was announced:

It is intended to preserve the records of historical societies throughout the country, and, by reports of their meetings, indicate the progress of the national taste for this branch of literature.

* * *

It is the distinguishing feature of the present work, that we represent no individual society, but shall be satisfied only with the support of all.⁵²

The *Historical Magazine* enjoyed the loyal support of American historical societies. Officers of associations brought the publication to the attention of members and recommended that they subscribe individually,⁵³ and societies as weak as the Illinois Literary and Historical Society ordered ten copies.⁵⁴ Before the completion of one year, Charles Benjamin Richardson, publisher of the *Historical Magazine*, considered moving the offices of the periodical from Boston to New York in order to increase

⁵⁰C. B. Richardson, Boston, to the New York Historical Society, November 6, [1856]. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁵¹C. B. Richardson, Boston, to the American Antiquarian Society, November 20, 1856. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

⁵²I (January, 1857), 1-2.

⁵³*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1856-1859*, p. 60.

⁵⁴Alton *Daily Courier*, June 4, 1858. Reprinted with title "Fifty-Five Years Ago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, VI (April, 1913), 140.

its circulation.⁵⁵ This was done in 1858, and George Folsom, former librarian of the New York Historical Society, became the new editor. Folsom served in this capacity only one year, but the *Historical Magazine* continued to be published in New York until 1875.

Richardson's monthly formed an excellent medium of communication for early American historical societies. Proceedings of organizations in many sections of the country, memoirs of deceased officers, sketches of the institutions, and reports of historical investigations prepared at their request all appeared in its pages. In one issue are reports of the activities of more than a dozen societies, papers read before the New England Historic Genealogical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and an original contribution by George H. Moore of the New York Historical Society. The periodical regularly contained book reviews, texts of manuscripts, and miscellaneous information of interest to historians. In its pages each society could learn what similar associations were doing, and it was hoped that thereby a "community of feeling" would be developed. The *Historical Magazine* espoused the opinion that societies formed for a common purpose "should work unitedly."⁵⁶

⁵⁵C. B. Richardson, Boston, to George H. Moore, October, 1857. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁵⁶I, iii.

X

The Writing of American History

ALTHOUGH the principal contribution of early historical societies to American historiography was the collection and preservation of materials for historians of later generations, the institutions did much to advance historical writing in the United States before the Civil War. Their collections were open to early nineteenth century authors and students, and many of the organizations were responsible for the preparation of historical works regardless of the fact that a historical society is formed not to write history but to facilitate its writing. Moreover, early American historical societies discussed the nature and proper scope of history, and it was observed that the institutions were instrumental in fostering a widespread interest in the growth of the nation.

Jared Sparks and later students of American historiography have noted that before large scale history of the country could be written the materials had to be readily accessible.¹ At the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century Abiel Holmes' *American Annals* was the most satisfactory record of American development, but within twenty-five years appeared the major work of Jared Sparks, George Bancroft, and Richard Hildreth. Our early national historians utilized the collections of the older historical societies, but it is not possible to determine the im-

¹"Materials for American History," *The North American Review*, XXIII (October, 1826), 287; W. C. Ford, "The Historical Society of Today," *Addresses Delivered at the Observance of the Centennial of the New Hampshire Historical Society, September 27, 1923* (Concord: Published by the Society [1923?]), p. 57; and Michael Kraus, *A History of American History* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart [c1937]), p. 171.

portance of this assistance. In June, 1826, Sparks examined Lord Stirling's papers in the library of the New York Historical Society, and later in the year he asked to use certain Gates papers in Boston.² In 1829 the Massachusetts Historical Society permitted Sparks to take from its library volumes needed "for the objects he has in view,"³ probably the preparation of his *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*. George Bancroft requested permission to use the library of the Boston organization in 1833,⁴ and it has been claimed that his *History of the United States* could not have been written without the materials furnished by the Massachusetts Historical Society.⁵ No record has been found of Richard Hildreth's use of a collection of a historical society, yet he was well acquainted with the work of the associations. In his acknowledgment of election to honorary membership in the New York Historical Society Hildreth wrote that he considered it "the most active and efficient institution of its kind in the country."⁶

Commendable histories of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania were written by Thomas Hutchinson, Jeremy Belknap, and Robert Proud in the second half of the eighteenth century, but the development of many other states was not described for a number of decades. The settlement of Georgia had been told by Alexander Hewat in his *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia* published in 1779, yet the founders of a historical society in Savannah considered the history of Georgia "untrodden ground."⁷ The history of Louisiana was not generally available

²Herbert Adams, *The Life and Writings of Jared Sparks* . . . (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1913), I, 498; and Jared Sparks to Dr. David Hosack, November 23, 1826. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, I (1879), 424.

⁴George Bancroft, Boston, to the Massachusetts Historical Society, August 14, 1833. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the society.

⁵*The North American Review*, XLIV (January, 1837), 261.

⁶Richard Hildreth, Boston, to James W. Beekman, January 8, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁷"Introduction," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), viii.

until Charles Gayarré's splendid volumes, in which were utilized the transcriptions of Spanish documents obtained under the direction of the Louisiana Historical Society,⁸ appeared in the forties and fifties. Samuel Smith described the first century of white settlement in New Jersey in his *History of the Colony of Nova-Cæsaria, or New-Jersey . . .* published in 1765, but no satisfactory history of the state appeared before the Civil War. This situation, according to a justice of the state supreme court, was a result of the fact that New Jersey was so long without a historical society.⁹

Historians of regions without historical societies were confronted with difficulties sufficient to discourage most authors. In the preparation of his work, a local historian in New York was compelled to grope his way "solitary and alone, without an historic Bank to draw on for a single written-down fact,"¹⁰ and Albert J. Pickett began his two volume history of Alabama without even the most ordinary aids to scholarship. Pickett was obliged to buy books and manuscripts in Europe and America "without regard to cost or trouble," and he collected oral information wherever he found it. The announcement of the establishment of a historical society in Tuscaloosa caused the Alabama historian to "rejoice," for he believed that the institution would spare later writers much of the arduous labor he had experienced.¹¹

Many early nineteenth century historians availed themselves of the resources of American historical societies. In 1816 Sir Nicolaas C. Lambrechtsen, Grand Pensionary of Zealand, sought from the New York society information about New Amsterdam, and he was sent copies of the two volumes of *Collections* then

⁸Charles Gayarré, *Louisiana: Its History as a French Colony . . .* (New York: John Wiley, 1852), pp. x-xi.

⁹Stacy Potts, Trenton, to Lyman Draper, March 11, 1854. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

¹⁰Samuel Eager, Newburgh, to Lyman Draper, March 20, 1854. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

¹¹A. J. Pickett, *History of Alabama . . .* (2nd ed., Charleston: Walker and James, 1851), I, vii-viii.

published.¹² Lambrechtsen's *Korte Beschrijving . . . van Nieuw-Nederland . . .*, published in Middleburg in 1818, was translated by a member of the New York institution and included in its *Collections* issued in 1841. General James Wilkinson incorporated papers of the New York institution in the first edition of his *Memoirs*, but he failed to acknowledge the ownership of the documents. When Wilkinson asked to copy other papers of the society for a new edition of his work, the institution, after expressing disappointment over his discourtesy, again permitted the former governor and Burr conspirator to use its manuscripts.¹³ In the preparation of his *History of Oregon and California* Robert Greenhow used in Washington a copy of Daniell W. Harman's *Travels in America* which belonged to the American Antiquarian Society. Greenhow could not locate the volume in New York or Philadelphia but was enabled to borrow the Worcester library copy through the intercession of Senator William Davis.¹⁴ Benjamin J. Lossing made frequent use of the library of the New York society when at work on his *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*,¹⁵ and Peter Force and his assistant, Matthew St. Clair Clarke, examined the collections of many historical libraries for material to include in their monumental *American Archives*.¹⁶

Some of the requests for historical information doubtlessly taxed the patience of the officers of the societies. The librarian of the American Antiquarian Society was asked not only for as-

¹²Thomas Dixon, Amsterdam, to the New York Historical Society, December 4, 1816; and *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, Second Series, I (1841), 76. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the society.

¹³James Wilkinson to John Pintard, April 8, 1817; and New York Historical Society, Minutes, May 6, 1817. MSS in the library of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁴Robert Greenhow, Washington, to William Davis, January 30, 1840. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

¹⁵B. J. Lossing to George H. Moore, December 1, 1849. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹⁶C. C. Baldwin, *Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin . . .* (Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society, VIII [1901]), 237-238.

sistance in the preparation of a projected documentary history of Illinois but that the information be supplied in a form suitable for reading before the members of the Illinois Literary and Historical Society!¹⁷ A popular sentimental writer, Emma Southworth, requested from the Maryland Historical Society information about the first Lord Baltimore, whom she intended to make the hero of a novel. Although under contract to write the volume, Emma Southworth knew very little about her subject, for she inquired, "Whom did Sir George Calvert marry? Who were the parents of Sir George? What caused his death just at the crisis when it occurred?"¹⁸ In the letter in which Abraham Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, asked the Massachusetts Historical Society about its organization, he solicited copies of lectures delivered by Everett, Adams, Webster, Bancroft, and others before the society and "any mechanical, agricultural, manufacturing and commercial community." These he hoped would be sent to him at Springfield "now and from time to time." Herndon's statement that "poverty is staring us all in the face" may explain his inability to buy reading matter, but it does not excuse his mailing the letter to the Boston institution without paying the postage!¹⁹

In the summer of 1828 the Massachusetts Historical Society voted to "afford every facility" to the commissioners for settling the dispute over the boundary line between Maine and New Brunswick. Two maps, an atlas, and Morse's *American Geography* were among the publications furnished by the society.²⁰ It is curious that the commissioners to settle an international controversy should have been exceedingly careless about the disposition of the documents consulted. Faden's map was not returned to the Massachusetts Historical Society until 1841, and

¹⁷W. C. Flagg, Moro, Illinois, to the American Antiquarian Society, March 31, 1858. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the society.

¹⁸Emma Southworth, Washington, to J. Morrison Harris, July 10, 1850. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

¹⁹William Herndon, Springfield, to the Massachusetts Historical Society, March 29, 1842. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the society.

²⁰*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, pp. 414-416.

maps by D'Anville and Bowen used by the commissioners were not located for more than two decades. In 1852 Edward Everett, a leading member of the Boston institution, became Secretary of State and ordered a search of the files of the State Department which yielded the long missing property of the historical society.²¹

In the first half of the nineteenth century historical societies performed many functions of public libraries, an institution which did not become well established until after 1870. The societies were frequently asked for information not historical in nature, such as a list of the colleges in the country or the most desirable section of a new state for settlement.²² One of the most erudite men of the time was the self-educated Elihu Burritt, "The Learned Blacksmith." Burritt acquired much of his vast knowledge in the library of the American Antiquarian Society, and it was observed that if the Worcester library had done nothing more than educate "The Learned Blacksmith" it had fully justified its existence.²³

Not content to serve only as depositories for historians, numerous societies discussed projects worthy of historical treatment and others sponsored the actual writing of such works. Five years after the publication of the first volume of Bancroft's history the American Antiquarian Society appointed a committee composed of John Quincy Adams, Josiah Quincy, and Thomas Robbins "to consider the best means of encouraging the production of a comprehensive History of the United States."²⁴ Little had been written on the history of the Post Office Department before 1838, but in that year the Massachusetts Historical

²¹*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1835-1855*, II (1880), 224, 491-492, 510, and 524-525.

²²W. R. Prince, Flushing, to the New York Historical Society, March 20, 1844; and Edwin M. Stone, Providence, to Lyman Draper, July 12, 1854. MSS in the correspondence files of the New York Historical Society and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

²³J. R. Semmes, Fultonville, New York, to Lyman Draper, March 16, 1854. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

²⁴*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 368; and *Diary of Thomas Robbins, D. D., 1796-1854 . . .* (Edited by I. N. Tarbox; Boston: Beacon Press), II (1887), 535-536.

Society published a number of postal records from Massachusetts archives to assist later historians of the subject.²⁵ In 1855 the Virginia Historical Society considered a biography of Madison a desideratum and requested its president, William C. Rives, to write the book.²⁶ Rives undertook the work proposed by the Richmond association, and his important *History of the Life and Times of James Madison* in three volumes appeared in 1866-68.

Several early nineteenth century histories would not have been published if it had not been for the existence of certain societies. The Georgia Historical Society induced William Stevens to write a history of the state, which he would not have begun otherwise. Much of Stevens' research was done in the library of the historical society, and the work was completed only after the society offered to assume the cost of publishing the second volume.²⁷ S. W. Eager's *Outline History of Orange County* was an outgrowth of a paper read before the Newburgh Historical Society. Its author feared the judgment of critics, but he was glad to have done something to advance the objects of the association.²⁸ A history of Tazewell County, Virginia, was written to "excite the members of the Jeffersonville Historical Society to action." The author, George Bickley, intended to write the history of the entire southwest, and both the plan and the lone completed volume resulted from his close association with a historical society. "Had the Jeffersonville Historical society not been established," wrote Bickley, "I am quite confident that I should not have become [an] historiographer."²⁹

The history produced by the sixty-five historical societies established before the Civil War was largely local. This was true of larger institutions as well as of those whose chief interest was the history of a town or county. Thomas Wallcut wrote to

²⁵*Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, VII (1838), 48.

²⁶*The Virginia Historical Reporter* . . . , I, Part III (1856), 7.

²⁷William Stevens, *A History of Georgia* . . . (New York: D. Appleton and Co.), I (1847), xiii; and II (1859), xiii-xiv.

²⁸Samuel Eager, *An Outline History of Orange County* . . . (Newburgh: S. T. Callahan, 1846-1847), p. 3.

²⁹G. W. L. Bickley, *History of the Settlement and Indian Wars of Tazewell County, Virginia* . . . (Cincinnati: Morgan & Co., 1852), p. x.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge on behalf of the Massachusetts Historical Society, "Let me beg of you at least a Topographical Description of Pittsburgh with as many remarks as you please."³⁰ Dr. Samuel Miller, a founder of both the New York and New Jersey organizations, proposed to the latter that a history of each town and county in New Jersey should be written,³¹ and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who was a member of associations in New York and Michigan, advised the new superintendent of the historical society in Wisconsin, "There is one class of facts, to which I would invite your attention. It is the history of the settlement of counties & towns."³² Miller and Schoolcraft had before them the examples of the Maine and New Hampshire societies which included many local histories in their early publications.

Several local historical societies met with considerable success in the preparation of town and county histories. In 1847 the Middlebury Historical Society selected residents of various towns in Addison County to write histories of their communities, and about half completed their assignments.³³ The Fire Lands Historical Society appointed committees of two in each township of the original county of Huron "to collect and reduce to writing, all facts, statistics and matters of interest, in relation to the early settlement of their respective townships, and report the same to the Secretary of the Society."³⁴ Thereby the organization was enabled to publish twenty-nine Ohio historical sketches in its *Fire Lands Pioneer* between June, 1858, and the end of 1860.

Local history as conceived by the early historical societies was not without substance. The Fire Lands Historical Society requested information on sixteen subjects including aboriginal

³⁰Copy of letter dated August 25, 1794, in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

³¹Samuel Miller, "An Address Delivered before the New Jersey Historical Society, in Princeton, September 4, 1845," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1845-1846*, I (1847), 87.

³²H. R. Schoolcraft, Washington, to Lyman Draper, March 11, 1854. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

³³H. P. Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont* . . . (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1886), p. 122.

³⁴*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, I (June, 1858), 29.

remains, vital statistics, educational history, and general items. Under the last heading was to be included any information of interest not covered by the other fifteen headings.³⁵ The New Jersey Historical Society listed twenty-nine queries which should be answered in the preparation of local histories. These covered publication of periodicals, manufacturing, records of travel, and statistics of agricultural production.³⁶ After its reorganization in 1839 the Connecticut Historical Society requested ministers of all religious denominations to prepare accounts of their parishes. These were to include, among other things, the lives of ministers, special events of religious or general interest, and population statistics. It was believed that the interest of the local clergy in the ecclesiastical history of Connecticut would furnish much information not otherwise obtainable.³⁷

The frequent discussions of the nature of history which appear in the publications of early American historical societies are remarkably modern in their catholicity. According to the American Antiquarian Society, "The history that is hereafter to be written is not to be merely the history of government and of politics, but the history of man in all his relations and interests, the history of science, of art, of religion, of social and domestic life."³⁸ In 1849 the Virginia Historical Society commented that it was generally understood that history should not be merely "the transactions of the *government* of a country, but the doings, the progress, the character, of its *people*." To meet the needs of such historians the libraries of historical societies should contain information about both the development of humanitarian institutions and the prevalence of cock-fighting and similar pastimes.³⁹ It was emphasized by the young state historical society in Iowa that accounts of prominent occurrences were of much less importance for an understanding of real history than a

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

³⁶*Constitution and By-Laws of the New Jersey Historical Society* . . . (Newark: Press of the Historical Society, 1846), pp. 19-23.

³⁷Henry Barnard, "An Account of the Connecticut Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XIII (February, 1841), 287-288.

³⁸*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 557.

³⁹*The Virginia Historical Register* . . . , II (October, 1849), 210.

knowledge of the "springs and influences" which caused the events. Such influences, which often pass unnoticed, are the real basis of history, and prominent incidents are but the manifestations thereof.⁴⁰

It is, of course, impossible to determine the importance of such intangibles as the influence of sixty-five institutions on the development of an interest in history throughout the land, but some observers believed it to be considerable. The *Southern Quarterly Review* noted that the origin of many historical works could be traced to the spirit of inquiry created by the organizations,⁴¹ and a member of a western association reflected, "If celebrated histories are not produced by the members of such societies it is by them that our celebrated historians are *formed*—that the spirit of research is awakened & the materials furnished."⁴² Indeed, it has been maintained that the societies cultivated the historical spirit so extensively that they became important agencies in the promotion of "intelligent conservatism in politics, society, and morals."⁴³

Even before the Civil War the contributions of historical societies to American historiography were widely recognized. Justice Story believed the institutions would "furnish ample means for a true & worthy" history of the republic,⁴⁴ and Joseph Henry, first head of the Smithsonian Institution, declared, "Nothing is more important to the future history of our country than that local associations shall be formed to gather up and preserve

⁴⁰*Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa*... ([Iowa City?] Printed by Jerome & Duncan, 1861), pp. 7-8.

⁴¹III (January, 1843), 41.

⁴²Alfred Russell, Detroit, to Lyman Draper, September 2, 1857. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁴³W. I. Fletcher, "Historical Societies in the United States, Part II," U. S. Education Bureau, *Public Libraries in the United States of America*... (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), I, 330-331. Cf., *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849*, p. 432; and John Palfrey, "A Discourse Pronounced before the Society, October 31, 1844..." *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series*, IX (1846), 175.

⁴⁴Joseph Story to Erastus Benedict, November 9, 1844. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

the accounts of events as they occur."⁴⁵ However, the achievements of American historical societies between 1790 and 1860 were best described by a Maryland lawyer and philosopher in his letter acknowledging election to membership in the Baltimore association: "I auger great benefits to history, from the many historical societies, with general and specific purposes, which have been established over our country. The materials for history, in all past time, have been of very doubtful character. The labours of the historical societies will greatly lessen this evil."⁴⁶

⁴⁵Joseph Henry, Washington, to Lyman Draper, March 17, 1854. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁴⁶Samuel Tyler, Frederick City, to J. Morrison Harris, January 15, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

American Historical Societies
1790-1860

Part Two

Alabama

ALABAMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

IN JANUARY, 1850, Dr. Basil Manly, president of the University of Alabama, invited interested persons to be present in Tuscaloosa at the next commencement for the organization of a state historical society.¹ At this meeting on July 8, 1850, Dr. Manly explained the plan of the society and presented a constitution he had prepared. This was adopted without change, and forty-six members were enrolled. Judge Alexander Bowie, a trustee of the university, was elected president, and Joshua H. Foster, a tutor in mathematics, was named corresponding secretary.² Dr. Manly, always an active member of the association until he left Alabama in 1855, accepted no office except a place on the executive committee.

Within one year the society had sixty-four members who had paid five dollars for annual membership or fifty dollars for life membership. An act of incorporation was approved February 5, 1852, and for about ten years thereafter meetings were regularly held in Tuscaloosa at commencement.

The objects of the society were "to discover, procure, preserve and diffuse whatever may relate to the natural, civil, literary and ecclesiastical history of the State of Alabama, and of the States in connection with her."³ It was the idea of the founders to secure a copy of every book and newspaper published in the state and all documents illustrative of the history of the United States. To advance the aims of the organization several members agreed

¹Thomas Owen, "Dr. Basil Manly, the Founder of the Alabama Historical Society," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, 1899-1903, IV (1904), 127, 131.

²Mitchell Garrett, "The Preservation of Alabama History," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, V (January, 1928), 4.

³*Constitution of the Alabama Historical Society; Organized at Tuscaloosa, July 8th, 1850* (Tuscaloosa: Printed by M. D. J. Slade, 1850), p. 3.

to report on phases of state history.⁴ A few contributions were obtained in this manner, but indolence and indifference kept many from fulfilling expectations.

The collections of the Alabama Historical Society contained only "the current newspapers of the State, . . . a few old books of no great value, and a small collection of fossils and Indian relics."⁵ These were stored in the law office of the secretary where the newspapers were used to start fires by a company of Confederate soldiers quartered there in 1862. Twelve years later Joshua H. Foster gathered up the remaining books and papers and deposited them in the university library. The society was reorganized on June 20, 1874, and in 1905 its activities were taken over by the State Department of Archives and History.

⁴*Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society, at Its First Annual Meeting, Held at the University of Alabama, July 14, 1851* (Tuskaloosa: Printed by J. W. & J. F. Warren, 1852), pp. 8-9.

⁵Garrett, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Arkansas

ANTIQUARIAN AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

IN A MEETING on May 16, 1837, the "Antiquarian Association of Little Rock" was organized by the adoption of a constitution and the election of officers. Hon. Edward Cross was chosen president and G. C. Watkins corresponding secretary. The annual membership fee was set at five dollars, and a date for the annual meeting was agreed upon.¹

On November 25, 1837, an "Act to Incorporate the Antiquarian and Natural History Society of the State of Arkansas" was approved. The preamble states that "the encouragement of learning, and the dissemination of useful and entertaining knowledge are objects of vital importance to the people of the state . . ." and that the "association recently formed at the city of Little Rock . . . is well calculated to accomplish these desirable ends."²

Natural history was the chief interest of the society. In 1841 Dr. William Gaulding appealed for contributions to the collection which should embrace "not only specimens of natural and artificial curiosities, but also a library . . . and an apparatus for making experiments in natural philosophy and chemistry."³ Historical sketches of the geological formation, climate, first settlement, growth of population, and remarkable incidents in each county were solicited from interested residents.

At the annual meeting in 1842, Rev. W. W. Stevenson was elected president, G. C. Watkins was reelected corresponding secretary, and the nominations of sixteen new members were approved. In his inaugural address President Stevenson declared

¹Myra Vaughan, "The First Historical Society of Arkansas," *Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association*, II (1908), 346.

²Arkansas, Statutes, *Acts Passed at a Special Session, 1837-1838*, p. 30.

³As quoted in Vaughan, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

that although many valuable specimens had been collected others had been lost through ignorance of their worth. In the *Little Rock Gazette* for March 9, Stevenson requested donations of "fossils, minerals, petrifications, old pottery or other Indian relics, old and rare volumes, manuscript, or articles of historical value . . ." ⁴ At the meeting on July 25, 1842, Dr. W. Byrd Powell, an honorary member, presented his report on the Fourche Cove, "together with 120 specimens, chiefly Geological . . ." ⁵ The report was published by the society, but no record has been found of later activity.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁵*A Geological Report upon the Fourche Cove and Its Immediate Vicinity . . .* (Little Rock: Printed by Order of the Society, 1842), p. 2.

California

WHETHER or not a historical society was organized in California before the Civil War is a moot question. It is stated in print that a "Historical Society of the State of California" was incorporated April 29, 1852, with S. J. Field, J. B. Moore, H. W. Halleck, R. Greenhow, J. G. Marvin, A. S. Taylor, P. B. Reading, Pablo de la Guerra, and W. J. Shaw as directors.¹ The statement seems plausible because of the fulness of detail and the inclusion of the names of Jacob Moore and Robert Greenhow, both of whom were in California in 1852 and had been well acquainted with eastern historical institutions. However, no other record of the incorporation has been found. One investigator found no trace of the association in contemporary newspapers,² and no charter for a historical society is included in the California session laws for 1852.

It is probable that the formation of a historical society in California was proposed in 1852 but none was organized. This conclusion is supported by a statement made in 1855 by a Californian who had been an officer of the Ohio Historical and Philosophical Society: "There was a partial organization of a state Historical society here, some three years since, but nothing has been done since, we shall try and recusitate [!] it this winter and get it established on a perminant [!] basis—" ³

¹*Papers of the California Historical Society*, I, Part I (1887), xvii.

²"California Historical Society, 1852-1922," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, I (July, 1922), 9.

³A. Randall, San Francisco, to Lyman C. Draper, October 16, 1855. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Connecticut

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE CONNECTICUT Academy of Arts and Sciences, soon after its organization in New Haven on March 4, 1799, distributed a circular letter requesting the preparation of a full statistical history of every city, town, and parish in the state. Within a few years accounts from more than thirty towns were received, and in 1811 publication was begun with Timothy Dwight's *A Statistical Account of the City of New-Haven*. So few copies were sold of the three accounts printed that the others were left in manuscript in the archives of the academy.¹

Upon the petition of John Trumbull, author of *M'Fingal*, and thirty others, an act of incorporation was granted by the Connecticut legislature in 1825 "for the purpose of discovering, procuring, and preserving whatever may relate to the civil, ecclesiastical, and natural history of the United States, and especially of the State of Connecticut . . ." ² The act further provided that the corporation should hold an annual election of officers. Accordingly, the Connecticut Historical Society was organized on May 31, 1825, with John Trumbull as president and Rev. Thomas Robbins as corresponding secretary. In less than a year President Trumbull and Professor George Washington Doane, secretary of the standing committee, removed from the state. For this reason the second annual meeting was not held, and the charter of the society became forfeit.

In 1839 fifteen of the original incorporators and eighteen others obtained a renewal of the 1825 charter and elected Secre-

¹Edward Herrick, "Historical Sketch of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences," *The American Quarterly Register*, XIII (August, 1840), 26-27.

²*The Act of Incorporation, and the Constitution of the Connecticut Historical Society, with an Address to the Public* (Hartford: Charles Babcock, 1825), p. 3.

tary of State Thomas Day president and Henry Barnard corresponding secretary. Thereafter for some time the association held weekly or semi-monthly meetings in Hartford, and in October, 1840, it had ninety resident and twenty-nine honorary members.³ A committee was appointed to prepare a volume of historical papers for publication in 1841. This effort was premature, for no *Collections* appeared until 1860.

By 1845 the organization had acquired "a large and valuable collection of books, manuscripts and antiquities, illustrative of the colonial, revolutionary and subsequent history of Connecticut..." To make the collection available and to insure its preservation, the legislature appropriated one thousand dollars to be expended in arranging and binding manuscripts and papers.⁴ The work of acquisition was facilitated by the appointment in 1844 of Dr. Robbins to be librarian. For many years he had bought about two hundred dollars worth of books annually until he finally accumulated about five thousand volumes. On June 18, 1846, Dr. Robbins agreed to leave his collection to the society on condition that he receive six hundred dollars a year for his work as librarian.⁵

Under the will of David Watkinson, who died December 13, 1857, the Connecticut Historical Society received several valuable bequests. Chief among these was the grant of \$100,000 "for the purpose of establishing in connexion with the Connecticut Historical Society a Library of Reference..."⁶ The collections of the society are still housed in the Wadsworth Athenæum, which was built to accommodate seven organizations including the Watkinson Library of Reference and the Connecticut Historical Society.

³Henry Barnard, "An Account of the Connecticut Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XIII (February, 1841), 291-292.

⁴Connecticut, *Statutes, Resolutions and Private Acts: Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, May Session, 1845*, pp. 74-75.

⁵*Diary of Thomas Robbins, D. D., 1796-1854...* (Edited by I. N. Tarbox; Boston: Beacon Press, 1886-1887), II, 827-828.

⁶... *Genesis and Development of the Connecticut Historical Society...* (Hartford: Published by the Society, 1889), pp. 54-55.

LITCHFIELD COUNTY HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

According to its first speaker, pride of ancestry brought about the formation of the Litchfield County Historical and Antiquarian Society in 1856. The society was advised to collect relics, autographs, and portraits of distinguished early residents and to faithfully arrange genealogical tables of all old families in the county.¹

The second article of the constitution gave for its objects "the collection and preservation of such historical facts and data . . . as may serve to throw light upon the history of the several towns and families in the county, and . . . by means of occasional essays and lectures, to seek to develop the resources of the county, and extend a knowledge of whatever relates to its history."² Other articles provided for officers, fees, and meetings, and for a corresponding committee in each town near Litchfield.

The collection of every kind of local information and the preparation of a county history were considered desirable projects for the Litchfield County Historical and Antiquarian Society. A meeting was held March 6, 1857, at which honorary members were elected, and on November 14, 1857, P. K. Kilbourne discussed the probable birthplace of Ethan Allan.³ However, little of importance was accomplished, for no mention of the organization has been found in Litchfield County histories.

¹G. H. Hollister, *Introductory Address Delivered at the Court House in Litchfield, Conn., April 9th, 1856 . . .* (Hartford: Press of Case, Tiffany and Company, 1856), pp. 5-14.

²*Ibid.*, p. 22.

³*The Historical Magazine . . .*, I (April, 1857), 112; and II (February, 1858), 49.

District of Columbia

AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE AMERICAN Historical Society was organized in Washington on October 12, 1835, "to discover, procure and preserve whatever may relate to the Natural, Civil, Literary, and Ecclesiastical History of America in general, and of the United States in particular."¹ Cognizant of work done by regional historical associations, the founders of this society designed to establish an organization whose field of inquiry would be the nation.

Lectures by Lewis Cass and Levi Woodbury were delivered before the society in the Hall of Representatives, and a small library was collected. The association numbered twenty-seven resident, thirty-two corresponding, and three honorary members in 1839. John Quincy Adams then served as president, but Peter Force was its moving spirit. Thirteen tracts which had been published in the first volume of his *Tracts and Other Papers* . . . (1836) were presented to the society and reprinted in its *Transactions* . . .² This activity was short-lived, for, according to Griffin, the organization dissolved in 1840.³

¹*Transactions of the American Historical Society* . . . , I (1839), 7.

²The tracts were published with separate paging in a second 1839 edition of the *Transactions*.

³*Bibliography of American Historical Societies* (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1905, II [1907]), 31.

Florida

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF FLORIDA

THE HISTORICAL Society of Florida, which had for its objects "the collection and preservation of documents and records bearing upon the history of Florida, from the earliest dates,"¹ elected honorary members in July, 1856. Its constitution permitted the five vice-presidents to be from any part of the state but required that other officers be residents of St. Augustine. The historian, George R. Fairbanks, who was chief organizer of the society, became a vice-president, and Major B. A. Putnam was elected president.

An annual fee of two dollars was paid by each of the 134 resident members, who included many of the leaders in the state government. Among the original members were the governor of Florida, two who became U. S. Senators, and many judges of the state courts.²

The circular of the society expressed a desire for "all manuscripts and letters bearing upon the past History of the State . . . ; also, ancient coins, curiosities, Indian implements and weapons, etc. . . ."³ Publications relating to "Florida or American history generally" were particularly solicited. Plans were made for the collection of a library and the publication of manuscripts illustrating the history of Florida, but little was done in either respect. Although George R. Fairbanks was first president of the Florida Historical Society organized in 1902, his successor had "no information as to what collections if any, were made by that [earlier] society, or what became of them."⁴

¹George Fairbanks, *The Early History of Florida. An Introductory Lecture . . . With an Appendix, Containing the Constitution, Organization, and List of Members of the Society* (St. Augustine: Published by the Florida Historical Society, 1857), p. 26.

²C. S. Fleming, "Observations on Original Members," *The Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, III (July, 1924), 10-13.

³Fairbanks, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁴Florida Historical Society, *Report of President, Charter and By-Laws* ([Jacksonville: 1906]), p. 3.

Georgia

GEORGIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DR. WILLIAM B. STEVENS, who had considered writing a history of Georgia, and I. K. Tefft, who had collected many valuable colonial and revolutionary documents, desired to form a historical society in Savannah. To awaken interest in the project, the former wrote two articles which were printed in the *Savannah Georgian* in May, 1839.¹ Tefft and Stevens were joined by Dr. Richard D. Arnold, and the three prepared and distributed a circular calling a meeting on May 24, 1839. The circular was sent to fifty-one individuals, replies were received from forty-nine, and twenty-five attended the first meeting. These last and twenty-seven others who desired to join but could not attend the meeting were the founders of the Georgia Historical Society.²

Drs. Arnold and Stevens, and Tefft had drafted a constitution which was referred to a committee for revision. On December 19, 1839, an act of incorporation was approved "for the purpose of collecting, preserving and diffusing information relating to the History of the State of Georgia in particular, and of American History generally..."³ The act provided further that the association should have free access to all records in state and town offices and that the Howard transcripts of colonial records in London were to be deposited with the society. The transcripts, which had been made by Rev. Charles Warren Howard by virtue of a resolution passed by the legislature December 23, 1837, filled twenty-two large volumes averaging more than two hundred pages each.⁴

¹W. B. Stevens, "Account of the Georgia Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XII (May, 1840), 344.

²[William Harden,] "The Georgia Historical Society," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, I (March, 1917), 7.

³Georgia, *Statutes, Acts of the General Assembly, of the State of Georgia, Passed in Milledgeville, at an Annual Session in November and December, 1839*, p. 132.

⁴"Introduction," *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), viii-ix.

John McPherson Berrien was chosen first president, and I. K. Tefft was named corresponding secretary. Berrien was succeeded in 1841 by Hon. John Wayne, who held office until 1854. Berrien served again until 1856, when he once more was followed by Judge Wayne who remained until 1862. In 1840 the Georgia Historical Society had 112 resident and 128 honorary members. The former paid a fee of ten dollars in the year of their election and five dollars a year thereafter.

The city of Savannah in 1842 granted the petition of the organization for a lot on which to erect a building. Since the members preferred another location, the city gave permission for the lot to be sold and the proceeds to be devoted to the purchase of one more suitable. In 1848 "a small but beautiful Gothic Hall" was built at a cost of \$6,000. Therein were placed the 2,500 volumes collected by the society and the library of approximately the same number acquired from the Savannah Library Society in 1847.⁵

A committee of five was appointed by the organization December 9, 1839, "to ascertain what materials were in its possession for the publication of a volume relating to the History of Georgia..."⁶ The selections of the committee make up the first volume of *Collections* published in 1840. In 1841 the society requested William Stevens "to prepare a new and complete History of Georgia..."⁷ This he did with the assistance of contributions from members and \$600 from the state for the expense of an agency to obtain additional transcripts from the State Paper Office. The second volume of *Collections*, which contains reprints of early pamphlets relating to Georgia, was published in 1842, and the first part of a third volume appeared in 1848. This paper, "A Sketch of the Creek Country in the Years 1798 and 1799," from a manuscript by Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, was printed at the expense of William B. Hodgson, "an estimable member of the Society."

⁵I. K. Tefft, Savannah, to Samuel Osgood, December 13, 1855. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁶*Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, I (1840), v.

⁷W. B. Stevens, *A History of Georgia...* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1847-1859), I, ix.

Illinois

ANTIQUARIAN AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ILLINOIS

ON DECEMBER 8, 1827, at a meeting in Vandalia "of a number of gentlemen, chiefly members of the bench and bar of the Supreme Court then in session," it was resolved to form a historical society for the state. A committee was appointed to prepare a constitution to be read at the next meeting. The objects of the society were "to collect, preserve and disseminate authentic information on the history and resources of Illinois."¹ To realize these aims the society desired minerals, fossils, antiquities, and manuscripts which illustrated the characteristics and development of the region.

The twenty-five members who signed the constitution on December 10 elected Judge James Hall and James Whitlock president and secretary respectively. Resolutions were adopted which instructed the committee of correspondence to obtain a record of the climate of Illinois, copies of all state publications, local newspapers, and all books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the objects of the society.

Judge Hall delivered eloquent addresses at meetings on December 10, 1827, and December 22, 1828. At the latter all officers were reelected, and a resolution was adopted which provided for the creation of ten standing committees to make reports at the next annual meeting. Among the fields of interest covered were Illinois antiquities and aborigines, activities of early settlers, geology, agriculture, and "the capabilities of the State for Internal Navigation."²

¹*Proceedings of the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois...* (Edwardsville: Printed by Robert K. Fleming, 1828), pp. 4-5.

²James Hall, *An Address Delivered before the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois...* (Vandalia: Printed by Robert Blackwell, 1829), pp. 19-20.

Although "the foundations for historical research" were "laid very broad and very deep,"³ by the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois, the association was active for only a few years. A British traveler was favorably impressed with the Vandalia organization in 1830, yet it did not long survive James Hall's departure three years later.⁴ The *Proceedings* . . . (1828) and *Address* . . . (1829) are the only important records left by this early Illinois society.

ILLINOIS LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Illinois Literary and Historical Society was founded at Upper Alton, July, 1843, "for the purpose of collecting, preserving, and diffusing information, relating to the history of Illinois in particular, and of American history generally . . ."¹ The act of incorporation approved February 11, 1847, directed the governor to give copies of all available state publications to the association and provided its agents with free access to state and local archives. In the event of dissolution, state donations were to be returned, and all other property was to be placed in care of the librarian of Shurtleff College "for the benefit of the future historian of the State."

President John James and other officers were elected December 2, 1857, and papers were read at a meeting on January 27, 1858. The following month several committees were appointed and arrangements were made for the early publication of a volume of transactions.² About this time Secretary W. C. Flagg was preparing a documentary history of Illinois, and he prob-

³Caroline McIlvaine, "Libraries as Local History Centers . . .," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, for the Year 1906*, (Publication No. 11 of the Illinois State Historical Library), pp. 188-189.

⁴J. T. Flanagan, *James Hall, Literary Pioneer of the Ohio Valley* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press [c1941]), p. 52.

¹Illinois, Statutes, *Laws of the State of Illinois, Passed by the Fifteenth General Assembly, 1846-1847*, p. 52.

²*The Historical Magazine* . . . , II (May, 1858), 140.

ably read selections from the work to his fellow members.³ The last Illinois Literary and Historical Society meeting of which record has been found was held in Middletown on the twenty-sixth of May, 1858.⁴

CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The establishment of a historical society in Chicago was contemplated in March, 1854,¹ but none was formed until April 3, 1856. The general objects of the new Chicago Historical Society were "to encourage historical enquiry and spread historical information, especially within the State of Illinois, and also within the entire territory of the North-West — to embrace alike their aboriginal and modern history."² This was to be done by collecting a library of books and historical manuscripts and a cabinet of relics and by encouraging the investigation of aboriginal remains. An act of incorporation which recognized the work of the association as "conducive to the public good of a State" was approved February 7, 1857.³

From the outset the Chicago Historical Society limited the number of resident members.⁴ No person was eligible for this class of membership who had not lived in Illinois for two years and did not intend to remain in the state. Not more than thirty resident members were to be admitted the first year, and the

³W. C. Flagg, Moro, to the American Antiquarian Society, March 31, 1858. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

⁴Alton *Daily Courier*, June 4, 1858. Reprinted with title "Fifty-Five Years Ago," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, VI (April, 1913), 140-141.

¹E. C. Larned, Chicago, March 20, 1854, to Lyman C. Draper. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

²*Constitution and By-Laws of the Historical Society of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: Daily Tribune Book and Job Office, 1856), p. 3.

³Chicago Historical Society, *Charter, Constitution and By-Laws, with a List of Officers, etc.* . . . (Chicago: Chas. Scott & Co.'s Book and Job Printing House, 1858), p. 3.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

number never was to exceed sixty. The young organization imposed an initiation fee of twenty dollars and an annual assessment of ten dollars. Moreover, unanimous approval was required for election to membership, and a member was dropped for continued absence from meetings.

Five committees of three members each supervised the business affairs of the organization, and eight committees of from three to five members undertook historical research in designated fields. Meetings of the association were held regularly, and the growth of its library was rapid. In each of the first five years about seven thousand volumes were added to the collections. The legislature voted that fifty copies of all state publications be given to the Chicago Historical Society on condition that it report its activities.⁵ The first report was written by its indefatigable corresponding secretary, Rev. William Barry, who had striven to establish an important historical collection in Chicago.

⁵"Biennial Report of the Chicago Historical Society, to the Governor of Illinois," *Reports Made to the General Assembly of Illinois, at Its Twenty-Third Session, Convened January 5, 1863*, I (1863), 443.

Indiana

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AT A MEETING of interested citizens in Indianapolis on December 11, 1830, John H. Farnham, a corresponding member of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society, presented a resolution to form the Historical Society of Indiana. After its adoption a committee was appointed to draft a constitution, which gave the objects of the association to be "the collection and preservation of all materials calculated to shed light on the natural, civil, and political history of Indiana, the promotion of useful knowledge, and the friendly and profitable intercourse of such citizens of the State, as are disposed to promote the aforesaid objects."¹ Judge Benjamin Parks and Farnham were respectively chosen president and corresponding secretary of the organization, which after November 8, 1831, was called the Indiana Historical Society. An act of incorporation was approved January 10, 1831.

Semi-annual meetings were to take place in Indianapolis during sessions of the Supreme Court, and annual meetings were to convene immediately preceding a session of the General Assembly. No meetings were held between 1835 and 1842. In December of the latter year the annual dues were reduced to fifty cents and arrears were cancelled, but the society did not revive. In January, 1848, John Dillon, state librarian and historian of Indiana, became librarian of the association, and a reorganization was effected. The membership fee of one dollar was restored, and a committee was appointed to collect the same and to inform the public of the interests of the society.²

Again the Indiana Historical Society succumbed. At a meeting on February 23, 1859, the first since 1853, the association once more was "reorganized and placed on a permanent basis."³

¹Indiana Historical Society, *Circular* (Indianapolis: 1838), p. 1.

²"Proceedings of the Indiana Historical Society, 1830-1886," *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I (1897), 30-36.

³Indiana Historical Society, [*Circular of the Reorganized Society*] (Indianapolis: 1859), p. 1.

An act of the legislature which appropriated five hundred dollars to aid the society in the acquisition of documents was approved March 4, 1859. Even this assistance was not enough to sustain the society, for it soon relapsed into a state of inactivity which continued until after the close of the Civil War.

VINCENNES HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Judge John Law delivered the opening address on the colonial history of Vincennes before the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society February 22, 1839.¹ Two thousand copies of the lecture were printed, but the edition was exhausted long before 1858 when a second with notes and illustrations was published.²

Two years after its formation the society sought to open regular correspondence with "other societies of a similar character throughout the U. S."³ The publication of a volume was then considered by the society, but it never appeared.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE COUNTY OF VIGO, INDIANA

The speaker before the Historical Society of the County of Vigo, Indiana on its first anniversary in 1844 was the Reverend Robert B. Croes, rector of St. Stephen's Church in Terre Haute. In his moral discourse on the ancient records of profane history, he emphasized that to realize the plans of the members "a LIBRARY is indispensable."¹ What these plans were and what was done to develop them is not known, for no other record of the society has been found.

¹*Address Delivered before the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society, February 22, 1839* (Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1839), 48 p.

²*The Colonial History of Vincennes...* (Vincennes: Harvey, Mason & Co., 1858), p. v.

³George R. Gibson, Vincennes, to the New York Historical Society, January 25, 1841. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹*The Anniversary Lecture, Pronounced before the Historical Society of the County of Vigo, Indiana, on the 14 of March, 1844* (Cincinnati: Printed by R. P. Donogh & Co., 1845), p. 7.

Iowa

IOWA HISTORICAL AND GEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

FOUR MEN, David Rorer, A. D. Green, Greenleaf Neally, and Dr. G. H. Hoit, organized in Burlington on December 18, 1843, the Iowa Historical and Geological Institute. According to its constitution, the object of the society was "the establishment of a cabinet of curiosities, of a library, and of a depository of records and papers relating to the primitive settlement, early history, and geological features of Iowa."¹

In May, 1846, David Rorer was president of the institute, and Dr. Hoit was corresponding secretary. At that time the organization had a small library and a cabinet of fifteen hundred specimens of fossils, ores and shells.² Six years later the geological and mineralogical specimens numbered two thousand, and a collection had been made of historical papers relating to the early history of Iowa.³

The collections contained eight hundred books, five thousand pamphlets, one hundred maps, two hundred manuscripts, four hundred Indian relics, a file of territorial papers, and a cabinet of natural history specimens when they were destroyed by fire in 1853. For a time the society was "almost broken up," but without expenditures for books, a second library was established. Six hundred volumes were owned by the Iowa Historical and Geological Institute in 1857.⁴

¹As quoted in Charles Jewett, ... *Notices of Public Libraries in the United States of America* (Washington: Printed for the House of Representatives, 1851), p. 185.

²G. H. Hoit to John Jay, May 22, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³Jewett, *loc. cit.*

⁴W. J. Rhees, *Manual of Public Libraries, Institutions, and Societies, in the United States, and British Provinces of North America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859), p. 52.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

In January, 1857, the sixth General Assembly voted a permanent annual appropriation of \$250 for a state historical society to be formed "under the auspices of the State University..."¹ Accordingly, the State Historical Society of Iowa was organized in Iowa City on the seventh of February principally "to collect, embody, arrange and preserve in authentic form, a library of books, pamphlets, maps, charts, manuscripts, papers, painting, statuary and other materials illustrative of the history of Iowa..."² The annual appropriation was increased to \$500 in 1860.

The act of 1857 also provided that thirty copies of all state publications should be delivered to the society for exchanges with similar organizations. Through this means it was hoped to obtain important donations to the library. Manuscripts of pioneers, information about Iowa Indians, specimens of natural history, and a copy of every book, pamphlet and newspaper published in the state were particularly desired by the society. In 1861 its library, which was housed in a building of the state university, contained more than three thousand volumes.

The affairs of the State Historical Society of Iowa were controlled by a board of eighteen curators, a majority of whom had to reside in or near Iowa City. The regular attendance of the first curators at the monthly business meetings gave encouragement to those interested in "the future prosperity of the Society."³

¹*Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa, ... and Laws of the State Relating to the Society* (Iowa City: Printed at the Iowa Tribune Office, 1869), p. 14.

²*Constitution of the State Historical Society of Iowa ...* ([Iowa City?] Printed by Jerome & Duncan, 1861), p. 4.

³*Biennial Report of the Executive Committee, of the Iowa State Historical Society ...* (Iowa, General Assembly, Legislative Documents, 1859-1860), p. 9.

Kentucky

KENTUCKY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN ACT OF incorporation for the Kentucky Historical Society was approved February 1, 1838, and the first meeting was held in Louisville on the twenty-ninth of the following month. The objects of the society as set forth in its circular address were "the collection and preservation of whatever may relate to the Antiquities, the Natural, Civil, Literary, and Ecclesiastical History of this country, but more particularly the State of Kentucky and the Mississippi Valley."¹

The constitution and by-laws adopted at the first meeting provided for the creation of standing committees to report annually on the state of agriculture, commerce, manufactures, means of travel and communication, growth of towns and population, education and literature, and religion and morals in Kentucky.² The reports on these topics were to be deposited in the archives of the society, thereby creating for posterity "the living record of every year."

In 1842 the association possessed a library of 820 bound volumes, 5,000 pamphlets, 68 volumes of newspapers, and a collection of the correspondence of early settlers of the region. It was admitted, however, that the library was "not rich in the records of its own country," for many of its volumes were donated by societies and friends in the East.³

The society had forty-seven resident members in 1842, but very few were active for it was often difficult to obtain a quorum

¹*Act of Incorporation, and Constitution and By-Laws of the Kentucky Historical Society, Organized March, 1838, at Louisville, Kentucky* (Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1838), p. 11.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 6, 8.

³Edward Jarvis, "Some Account of the Kentucky Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XV (August, 1842), 77.

of seven members at quarterly meetings. After three or four years of inactivity the society was revived, and its members evidenced "new zeal, vigor, and devotion."⁴ Three thousand volumes were owned by this organization, of which Hon. Henry Pirtle was president and T. P. Shaffner was corresponding secretary. In 1847 the Kentucky Historical Society secured the passage of an act which authorized the secretary of state to forward copies of all state publications to each historical society in the United States which desired them.⁵

⁴T. P. Shaffner, Louisville, to the New York Historical Society, March 20, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

⁵T. P. Shaffner, Louisville, to Rev. Charles Lowell, February 14, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Louisiana

LOUISIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PRELIMINARY meeting of the Historical Society of the State of Louisiana was held in New Orleans on May 9, 1835.¹ Judge Henry Adams Bullard occupied the chair and was requested to deliver an address at the first annual meeting in January, 1836. In his paper Bullard stated that it was the purpose of the society to inquire "into the history of all that country formerly possessed by France and Spain, under the name of Louisiane..."²

Few meetings were held, and the society suspended activities until June, 1846, when it was revived under the name of Louisiana Historical Society. Judge Francois Xavier Martin was chosen president, but after his death on December 11, 1846, Judge Bullard was elected to the office. A constitution repeating the introduction of that of the Massachusetts Historical Society was adopted July 1, 1846; a circular containing historical queries was published; and the secretaries, John Perkins and J. D. B. DeBow, were appointed to visit northern historical societies. In 1847 the Louisiana legislature appropriated \$2,000 to procure under auspices of the society copies of original documents from Spain.³ By August of that year the organization had collected 600 volumes.⁴

¹*Le Courier de la Louisiane*, May 14, 1835. Cited in Dora Bonquois, "The Career of Henry Adams Bullard, Louisiana Jurist, Legislator, and Educator," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (October, 1940), 1039.

²Henry Bullard, "A Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Louisiana, January 13, 1836," B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana* . . . (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), Part I, 3.

³J. D. B. DeBow, "An Account of the Louisiana Historical Society," B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana* . . . (Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith, 1850), Part II, 3-8.

⁴J. S. Peacocke, Clinton, to the Maryland Historical Society, August 10, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

No successor was named to Judge Bullard after his death on April 11, 1851. The society became "defunct,"⁵ but it was resurrected in 1859 with headquarters at Baton Rouge.⁶ Charles Gayarré was secretary of this organization which, by an act of the legislature approved January 10, 1860, decreed that in the event of dissolution "all . . . collections should revert to the State for the use of the State library."⁷

⁵Charles Gayarré, New Orleans, to Lyman C. Draper, April 5, 1854. MS in correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁶Walter Prichard, *ed.*, "Henry Adams Bullard: First President of the Louisiana Historical Society," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XIX (January, 1936), 8.

⁷Alcée Fortier, ["Historical Sketch of the Louisiana Historical Society,"] *Publications of the Louisiana Historical Society*, I (1895), 11.

Maine

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE MAINE Historical Society was organized in Portland April 11, 1822, "to collect and preserve . . . whatever . . . may tend to explain and illustrate any department of civil, ecclesiastical, and natural history, especially of this State, and of the United States."¹ The act of incorporation approved February 2, 1822, named fifty-nine incorporators including many of the political and educational leaders of the state. In 1829 the fee for initiation was three dollars and that for annual membership was one dollar. The first was increased to ten dollars in 1853, but the second remained one until 1859, when it was dropped altogether. The number of resident members was then seventy-eight, two less than the limit set by the society.

The organization was without funds to publish historical papers until after the adoption in 1829 of a by-law which required each member to subscribe to all publications. By this means volumes of *Collections* were issued in 1831 and 1843.² In 1849 a general fund was established with \$6,000 obtained from the sale of half a township of land given by the state of Maine. With this assistance four volumes appeared in the next ten years. Since the Maine Historical Society had always encouraged the preparation of town histories, original papers in the *Collections* were largely of that nature. The volumes also contain transcriptions from manuscript and reprints of pamphlets relating to Maine colonial history.

Before 1860 the library and cabinet of the Maine Historical Society were kept in the library of Bowdoin College at Bruns-

¹"Act of Incorporation," *Collections of the Maine Historical Society*, I (1831), i.

²William Willis, "Brief Notice of the Maine Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XIV (November, 1841), 150.

wick. The collections were first described in 1868. The library then consisted of 2,550 books, 130 volumes of newspapers, and 2,800 pamphlets, and the cabinet contained maps, Indian relics, and many valuable coins.³

³William Willis, "The Maine Historical Society. Its Origin and Progress," *The Historical Magazine . . .*, Second Series, III (January, 1868), 16-17.

Maryland

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AT THE FIRST meeting of the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore January 27, 1844, a constitution and by-laws drafted by John P. Kennedy, Brantz Mayer, and S. F. Streeter were adopted. The purposes of the organization were "to collect, preserve and diffuse, information relating to the Civil, Natural and Literary History of the State of Maryland, and American History and Biography generally."¹ The constitution provided for the establishment of county chapters which were to forward reports and collections to the society at Baltimore, and the by-laws stated that in the event of dissolution all donations would be returned to original owners. An act of incorporation was approved March 8, 1844.

The membership of the society increased with exceptional rapidity. Twenty attended the first meeting, and in less than three weeks "90 gentlemen of the first respectability tendered their names for membership, with a subscription of 10\$ each for the first year & 5\$ for each subsequent annual contribution!"² The list of members numbered 223 in 1850, 300 in 1854, and 500 in 1858.

A plan was adopted February 15, 1845, for consolidation of the Library Company of Baltimore and the Maryland Historical Society. Forty-five thousand dollars was subscribed in less than three months for the erection of a building in which to house the two organizations and the Mercantile Library Association. The act to incorporate the Athenæum provided that if either association dissolved the title to its property should be vested in the

¹*Constitution, By-Laws, Charter, Circular, and Members of the Maryland Historical Society* (Baltimore: Printed by John Murphy, 1844), p. 3.

²Brantz Mayer to George Folsom, February 16, 1844. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

other. In this manner the eleven thousand volumes of the Baltimore Library Company became the possession of the historical society.³

The Maryland Historical Society was active in many fields. In 1845 it published the *Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, During His Visit to Canada in 1776 . . .*, and about 1850 it opened an art gallery. Annual exhibitions were held, and in 1858 students of design were admitted to copy masterpieces. Outstanding among gifts to the Maryland Historical Society was the index to 1,729 Maryland documents in the State Paper Office. It was made by Henry Stevens of London at the expense of George Peabody, who presented it to the society in 1853.⁴

³*Annual Report of the President of the Maryland Historical Society, . . . 1858, [1858], p. 7; and Charter, Constitution, and By-Laws of the Maryland Historical Society* (Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1901), p. 5.

⁴*Catalogue of the Manuscripts, Maps, Medals, Coins, Statuary, Portraits and Pictures of the Maryland Historical Society . . .* (Baltimore: Printed for the Society by John D. Toy, 1854), p. 21; and Henry Stevens, London, to George Peabody, September 6, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

IN AUGUST, 1789, John Pintard visited Rev. Jeremy Belknap, the historian of New Hampshire, in Boston and proposed the formation of "a Society of Antiquaries . . ."¹ Belknap discussed the proposal with friends and prepared in August, 1790, a "Plan of an Antiquarian Society." Between that time and December 11, 1790, Belknap, Rev. John Eliot, Rev. Peter Thacher, William Tudor, and James Winthrop met to form a historical society. Five others joined them soon after the preliminary meeting.

At a meeting on January 24, 1791, the "Historical Society" was formally organized, a constitution was adopted, officers were elected, and a committee was appointed to determine what historical materials could be acquired. "The professed design" of the society was "to collect, preserve and communicate, materials for a complete history of this country . . ."² At the second meeting it was reported that eight or nine of the founders were willing to present valuable books and papers in their possession. Their donations established a library which in 1796 contained about a thousand books and some three thousand more in 1811. On February 19, 1794, an act to incorporate the Massachusetts Historical Society was approved.

Before it had been in existence one year the organization published historical papers. The first appeared in the weekly *American Apollo* on January 6, 1792. After September, 1792, the papers were issued in monthly pamphlets until the fifth vol-

¹Jeremy Belknap, Boston, to Ebenezer Hazard, August 10, 1789. "Belknap Papers, Part II," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Fifth Series, III (1877), 157.

²*The Act of Incorporation, the Laws, and the Circular Letter of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Printed at the Apollo Press by Joseph Belknap, 1794), p. 5.

ume of *Collections* was completed. This was the last volume issued in numbers. Lack of funds sometimes delayed the publications, but a volume appeared every few years. Before 1860 thirty-four volumes of *Collections* were issued. These include such notable works as Hubbard's *General History of New England* and William Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*.

The work of the association progressed slowly under its first three presidents, James Sullivan, Christopher Gore, and John Davis. In its early years the society collected specimens of natural history, but most of these were deposited with the Boston Society of Natural History in April, 1833. Several months later a committee was appointed to procure valuable manuscripts and portraits. During the thirties lectures by Edward Everett, Jared Sparks, George Bancroft, and others were sponsored, and a proposal was made to increase the membership from sixty to eighty. This was defeated in 1835 and again in 1846. A home for the society in the building of the Provident Institution for Savings was secured in 1833.

The Massachusetts Historical Society flourished under the leadership of James Savage and Robert C. Winthrop. In 1850 a memorial was sent to the legislature on the better preservation of municipal records, and appropriate legislation was passed in the next year. A committee on the subject of enlarged accommodations reported in 1853 that \$2,000 had been contributed for that purpose, and three years later the society purchased the entire building of the Provident Institution for Savings. The statutory limit on membership was increased to 100 in 1859.

In the fifties the society received its first large gifts. In 1854 a bequest of \$10,000 came from the estate of Thomas Appleton, and in August, 1856, Thomas Dowse presented his private library of five thousand volumes. After the death of Dowse in November, 1856, his executors appropriated to the society \$10,000 for the care of his library. The Belknap donation, which included "all the manuscripts, books, and pamphlets, relating to American history" left by the principal founder of the society, was received in 1858,³ and the Heath collection of Revolutionary

³*Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1855-1858, 1859, p. 285.*

War manuscripts was presented in 1859. At the end of the decade more than fourteen thousand volumes and approximately the same number of pamphlets were in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society.⁴

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Isaiah Thomas, newspaper publisher and author of a history of printing, had collected a library which he wished to preserve for public use. With a number of friends he petitioned the legislature for permission to establish an antiquarian society in Massachusetts, and this was granted October 24, 1812. At the first meeting on November 19, 1812, Thomas was elected president, and a committee was appointed to draw up regulations and by-laws. On February 3, 1813, the committee made its report, and President Thomas presented his books, some of which were "more ancient than are to be found in any other part of our country . . ."¹

Until his death on April 4, 1831, Thomas was president of the American Antiquarian Society, to which he gave between seven and eight thousand volumes and more than twenty thousand dollars. "The principal object of the liberal founder of the Antiquarian Society was that its library should be a place for collecting and preserving every variety of book, pamphlet and manuscript that might be valuable in illustrating any and all parts of American history."² In pursuance of this object Christopher Columbus Baldwin was engaged as librarian at an annual salary of \$600 in 1832, and after his death Samuel F. Haven was appointed in 1837. Under the care of Thomas, Baldwin, and Haven the library increased rapidly. In 1843 it contained six-

⁴*Catalogue of the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Printed for the Society, 1859-60), II, iii.

¹*An Account of the American Antiquarian Society, Incorporated, October 24th, 1812* (Boston: Published by Isaiah Thomas, Jun., 1813), p. 13.

²*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 282.

teen thousand volumes, and in 1859 between twenty-seven and twenty-eight thousand.

The American Antiquarian Society was not equally successful in other fields. In 1846 the Committee on Future Interests of the Society recommended that meetings be held more frequently for the reading of papers. Many younger societies were more active in publishing; only four volumes of the *Archæologia Americana* were issued between 1820 and 1860. A catalogue of the library was printed in 1837, more than twenty years after it had been resolved to do so in 1814.

The organization sought to justify its name by electing members "in all the principal cities and towns in the United States, and some in the interior of every state."³ Counsellors and receiving officers were named in various sections of the country. Governor William Clark accepted the former office in Missouri Territory, and Mathew Carey was one of the latter in Pennsylvania. At first the annual dues were two dollars, but in less than three years after organization it was voted to exempt from this payment any member who had paid six dollars to the institution. It was expected, however, that each member should contribute an article of value to the collections every year. In October, 1831, the number of members was limited to 140.

Thomas L. Winthrop served as president from 1831 until 1841, after which Edward Everett held the office until 1853. His successor, John Davis, died the following year, and Stephen Salisbury was chosen to fill the place. President Salisbury's gifts to the society included a lot for a new building, five thousand dollars to a building fund, the same amount to create a bookbinding fund, and about three thousand dollars to a publishing fund. Through his generosity and that of its founder, the funds of the American Antiquarian Society totalled more than forty-one thousand dollars in 1860.

ESSEX HISTORICAL SOCIETY

After the death in December, 1819, of Rev. William Bentley, antiquarian and scholar, certain residents of Salem desired to

³*Communication from the President of the American Antiquarian Society . . .* (Worcester: Printed by William Manning [1815]), p. 8.

preserve his library in that town. On application to the executor of Bentley's estate, it was learned that if the interested persons would form a historical society the collection would be placed in its custody. Accordingly on April 21, 1821, a meeting was held at which it was resolved to form the Essex Historical Society.¹

Twenty-six members, including Joseph Story, Nathaniel Bowditch, and Leverett Saltonstall, petitioned the General Court for an act of incorporation. This was approved June 11, 1821, and the first corporate meeting was held June 27. The objects of the society, according to the constitution, were "to procure and preserve whatever relates to the topography, antiquities, and natural, civil, and ecclesiastical history of the county of Essex."² Dr. Edward Augustus Holyoke was elected first president of the organization.

The Bentley library was not acquired, but the members persevered and collected a number of portraits, relics, and valuable books. In 1841 Dr. Henry Wheatland was placed in charge of the cabinet and library, and he was instrumental in bringing the association to adopt a liberal policy which attracted new members.

During the summer of 1847 the Essex Historical Society and the Essex County Natural History Society held several meetings to discuss a union. A joint committee was appointed to draft a suitable plan, and its proposal was adopted January 14, 1848. The new organization obtained an act of incorporation in February and met on the fourteenth of March as the Essex Institute. Its objects included the advancement of horticulture and the promotion of the science of natural history in addition to the collection and preservation of "whatever relates to the geography, antiquities, civil and ecclesiastical history of Essex county . . ."³

¹An *Historical Notice of the Essex Institute* . . . (Salem: Printed by the Institute, 1866), p. 3.

²Essex Historical Society, [*Petition for Incorporation, Act of Incorporation, Constitution, and Circular* (Salem: 1821)], p. 5.

³*Act of Incorporation, Constitution and By-Laws of the Essex Institute* . . . (Salem: Wm. Ives and Geo. W. Pease, 1855), pp. 5-6.

WORCESTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Worcester County Historical Society was organized to preserve "materials for a complete and minute history of Worcester County."¹ Revolutionary papers read before the members were printed in the *Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal*, which was edited and published by William Lincoln and Christopher C. Baldwin in 1825 and 1826. Presumably the association had no rooms of its own in 1827, for in that year its manuscripts "relating to the exertions and sufferings of the revolutionary contest" were deposited in the hall of the American Antiquarian Society.²

An act to incorporate the society "for the purpose of collecting and preserving materials for civil and natural history" was approved February 19, 1831.³ The eight incorporators were all members of the Antiquarian Society.

DORCHESTER ANTIQUARIAN AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On January 27, 1843, several gentlemen organized the Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society with Hon. Edmund P. Tileston as president and Ebenezer Clapp, Jr., as corresponding secretary. Although the objects of the association were given as "the collection and preservation of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and curiosities, bearing on the biography and history of men and things in the United States from the earliest times,"¹ its efforts were largely restricted to the history

¹As quoted in *Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin* . . . (Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society, VIII [1901]), note on p. 143.

²*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1849* (Worcester: Published by the Society, 1912), p. 220.

³Massachusetts, Statutes, *Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed by the General Court* . . . [January 5 to March 19, 1831], p. 567.

¹As quoted in William Orcutt, *Good Old Dorchester. A Narrative History of the Town, 1630-1893* (Cambridge: Published by the Author, 1893), p. 194.

of Dorchester and vicinity. A chief aim of the society was to insure the fame of the first settlers in the community.²

In 1844 appeared the *Memoirs of Roger Clap, 1630*, the first number in the *Collections* of the society. This was followed by James Blake's *Annals of the Town of Dorchester, 1750* (1846) and the *Journal of Richard Mather, 1635. His Life and Death, 1670* (1850). A more ambitious undertaking was the *History of the Town of Dorchester, Massachusetts* published in 1859. By 1857 the members had collected 480 volumes and 5,250 pamphlets "consisting of historical, statistical, biographical, and genealogical works."³

The association numbered only twelve members in 1845, but the membership was "designedly limited in number, the better to secure its efficiency . . ."⁴ The Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society maintained its identity until 1891, when it had but three members.⁵ On the sixth of April of that year a special act of the legislature incorporated the Dorchester Historical Society which thereupon displaced the earlier organization.

OLD COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An act to incorporate the Old Colony Historical Society was approved May 4, 1853, "for the purpose of preserving and perpetuating the history of the old colony in Massachusetts, and of collecting and holding documents, books and memoirs, relating to its history . . ."¹ Nathaniel Morton and John Ordronaux were chosen president and corresponding secretary respectively at the first meeting in Taunton February 23, 1854.

²Ebenezer Clapp, Jr. to John Jay, May 15, 1845. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³William Rhees, *Manual of Public Libraries, Institutions, and Societies, in the United States, and British Provinces of North America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1859), p. 141.

⁴*The Historical Magazine* . . . , I (May, 1857), 131.

⁵James Stark, . . . *History of the Old Blake House, and a Brief Sketch of the Dorchester Historical Society* (Dorchester: Dorchester Historical Society, 1907), p. 3.

¹Massachusetts, *Statutes, Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts, in the Year 1853* . . . , p. 537.

The organization began with a list of 279 resident members, but the connection of most was nominal. Until 1885 the society had no rooms of its own, and meetings were held where convenient.² Members were appointed to read historical reports before the society, but few were presented. Of these an example is S. L. Crocker's *Paper Read before the Old Colony Historical Society* (1856) on iron manufacture in Plymouth colony. For fifteen years the Old Colony Historical Society strove to keep alive, but after 1868 "it seems to have settled down into a state of inaction from sheer exhaustion . . ."³

DEDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

As early as 1853, Henry Orin Hildreth called the attention of several persons to the importance of establishing a historical society in Dedham. With the support of Calvin Guild, Hildreth brought about the formation of the Dedham Historical Society February 1, 1859, at a preliminary meeting in the office of the Dedham Institution for Savings. The objects there determined were "the preserving and transmitting to posterity all possible memorials of past and present times."¹

A committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws which were adopted at the next meeting on the fifteenth of February. The names of forty-one residents of the town were proposed for membership, but only twenty-two accepted nomination. At the first regular meeting held March 10, 1859, Rev. Alvan Lamson was elected president and Henry Hildreth corresponding secretary. The growth of the Dedham Historical Society was exceedingly slow, for in 1864 its library contained only sixty-eight volumes.²

²John Ordronaux, "Oration," *Collections of the Old Colony Historical Society*, No. 7 (1909), 38.

³S. H. Emery, "Historical Sketch of the Old Colony Historical Society," *Collections of the Old Colony Historical Society*, No. 1 (1879), 10.

¹"Brief Sketch of the Dedham Historical Society," *The Dedham Historical Register*, I (January, 1890), 3.

²Frank Smith, *A History of Dedham, Massachusetts* (Dedham: The Transcript Press, Inc., 1936), p. 293.

Michigan

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

ON JUNE 23, 1828, the Michigan Legislative Council approved a bill introduced by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft for the incorporation of the Historical Society of Michigan.¹ At the first meeting on July 3, 1828, General Lewis Cass was elected president of the association, and Henry Whiting was chosen corresponding secretary. Its objects were "to discover, procure, and preserve, whatever may relate to the natural, civil, literary, ecclesiastical and aboriginal history of the Country of the Lakes, and of the Territory of Michigan in particular."²

In each of its first four years a discourse was delivered before the society on a different period of Michigan history. Had these been continued the plan to prepare a history of the territory would have been realized.³ However, in September, 1832, the organization voted to place its library in the Detroit Athenæum, and meetings were discontinued until March 18, 1837. Schoolcraft then became president of the Historical Society of Michigan, but little was accomplished.⁴ Occasional meetings were held, but after January 27, 1841, all activity was suspended for sixteen years.

The successful example of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin encouraged Michigan residents to reorganize their

¹Henry Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes* . . . (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1851), p. 320.

²*Constitution and By-Laws of the Historical Society of Michigan, Incorporated June 23d, 1828* (Detroit: Printed at the Gazette Office, 1829), p. 3.

³Historical Society of Michigan, *Historical and Scientific Sketches of Michigan* . . . (Detroit: Stephen Wells and George L. Whitney, 1834), pp. iii-iv.

⁴Chase Osborn and Stellanova Osborn, *Schoolcraft-Longfellow-Hiawatha* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: The Jaques Cattell Press, 1942), p. 425.

society on August 4, 1857.⁵ Within one month more than one hundred members were elected, and by December 126 had paid the annual membership fee of one dollar. Thirteen standing committees were appointed to investigate civil and ecclesiastical history, mineralogy, biography, and other subjects.⁶

Activity again ceased between October, 1858, and February 24, 1859. Two years later permission to use a room in the hall of the Young Men's Society was withdrawn, and a committee was appointed to secure new quarters. The committee was unsuccessful, and the Historical Society of Michigan dissolved. Its "valuable collections of books, manuscripts, etc." were stored for several years, but in 1886 they were deposited in the Detroit Public Library.⁷

⁵*Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* . . . , IV (1859), 35.

⁶J. C. Holmes, comp., "The Michigan State Historical Society," . . . *Collections and Researches Made by the Pioneer and Historical Society of the State of Michigan*, XII (1888), 326-327.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 350.

Minnesota

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN UNAUTHORIZED action of Territorial Secretary Charles K. Smith brought into being the Minnesota Historical Society.¹ Without knowledge of the bearers, he included the names of eighteen men in a bill to incorporate a historical society in Minnesota. Among these were most of the officials in the territorial government, and Smith assumed that they would be interested in the association. The act of incorporation was approved by Governor Alexander Ramsey October 20, 1849, and on the fifteenth of the following month the society was organized in the office of Secretary Smith. Governor Ramsey was elected president of the society, and Rev. E. D. Neill was chosen its first secretary.

The act of incorporation gave the objects of the society as "the collection and preservation of a Library, Mineralogical and Geological specimens, Indian curiosities and other matters and things connected with, and calculated to illustrate and perpetuate the history and settlement of said Territory."² The constitution adopted January 14, 1850, gives the name of the organization as the "Historical Society of Minnesota." Its officers were to be elected every three years, and the fees were one dollar for admission, the same for annual membership, fifteen dollars for life membership, and fifty for perpetual membership. Appended to the constitution were the names of 120 resident members, including nearly every white man in the territory.

Secretary Neill wrote several historical papers for the society. His Dakota lexicon was to be published under its pat-

¹William LeDuc, "Organization and Growth of the Minnesota Historical Society," *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, IX (1901), 560-561.

²*Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society* . . . (Saint Paul: Printed by James M. Goodhue, 1850), p. 4.

ronage, and for the purpose subscriptions totalling six hundred dollars were pledged. This aid was not needed, because the Smithsonian Institution included the lexicon in one of its series. Rev. Neill was asked to write a supplementary work on manners and customs of the Dakotas. This was printed in the *Annals of the Minnesota Historical Society, for Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Three*. Papers in this and other *Annals* . . . published between 1850 and 1856 were principally addresses and brief articles on Minnesota history.

Meetings were held in the office of Charles K. Smith and elsewhere until in November, 1855, a room in the new capitol was assigned to the association. In the same year the society purchased two lots on which to erect a building. The cornerstone was laid June 24, 1856, but after the foundations were in, work was discontinued. No means of obtaining the construction cost of fifteen thousand dollars had been determined, and the money crisis of 1857 kept the society from soliciting contributions.³ The organization probably did not need a new building, because in 1858 only 441 volumes were in its library.

On January 15, 1856, Rev. E. D. Neill presented a report which stated that "to promote the interest of the Society and Territory" an annual appropriation of at least five hundred dollars should be made by the territorial government. This amount was voted by the legislature in March, 1856. For its part the Minnesota Historical Society was to enlarge its objects in order "to cultivate among the citizens thereof a knowledge of the useful and liberal arts, science, and literature [!]."⁴ Because of the financial distress throughout the state from 1859 to 1864, the Minnesota Historical Society with exemplary restraint waived its claim to public assistance in those years.

³*Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, I (1872), 6-7.

⁴*Proceedings of the Minnesota Historical Society, from Its Organization, November 15, 1849, to the Admission of the State, May 11, 1858* (Saint Paul: Ramaley & Cunningham, 1878), pp. 14, 18.

Mississippi

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSISSIPPI

ON THE ninth of November, 1858, the Historical Society of Mississippi was organized, on the tenth the first annual address was delivered, and on the seventeenth the twenty-six members were incorporated by the state of Mississippi "to collect, preserve, and perpetuate by publication or otherwise, the scattered and perishable memorials, both written and traditional, of our social and political history..." A House amendment to the act provided the society with space adjoining the state library, and a Senate amendment granted its officers and committees permission to examine and publish public archives.¹

The dominant spirit in the Historical Society of Mississippi was B. L. C. Wailes, planter and naturalist of the old Natchez region, whose Whig and Union sympathies did not prevent his leading many intellectual activities in early Mississippi. Wailes was a trustee of Jefferson College for nearly forty years, president of the first agricultural society in Mississippi, and author of the first geological survey of the state. He drafted the constitution of the historical association, gathered documents for its library, and served as its only president. On a trip to the North in the summer of 1859, he examined books and manuscripts relating to the history of his region and made many notes for reference. Wailes described the sources of Mississippi history he had discovered in an address which he expected to deliver at the annual meeting in 1859. However, Rev. William C. Crane, vice-president of the Historical Society of Mississippi, called the

¹*Constitution and Other Documents in Relation to the State Historical Society of Mississippi* (Jackson: Mississippian Steam Press Print, 1859), pp. 14-15.

meeting ahead of schedule, and Wailes was left without an audience.²

Wailes soon realized that he had overestimated the interest in the society, for only three had paid the annual membership fee of one dollar. Thereupon the books and papers collected were transferred to the custody of the state librarian and the association dissolved. "Although the society's life was brief and its end inglorious, it left behind a valuable legacy of collected materials and an aroused interest in the history of Mississippi."³

²Charles Sydnor, *A Gentleman of the Old Natchez Region, Benjamin L. C. Wailes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1938), *passim*. Chapter IX, pp. 234-258, is a detailed account of Wailes' relations with the Historical Society of Mississippi.

³*Ibid.*, p. 254.

Missouri

MISSOURI HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

IN THE SENATE chamber at Jefferson, December 14, 1844, fourteen men organized the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society. At this meeting a constitution was adopted, and a committee was appointed to apply for an act of incorporation. According to the constitution the objects of the society were "to collect, embody and preserve all papers, memorials and documents connected with the early history of Missouri."¹ The act of incorporation approved February 27, 1845, expressed these aims in greater detail and authorized the society "to rescue from oblivion the memory of the early pioneers of this State . . ." and "to promote the study of history . . ."²

Located at the capital, the society maintained a close relationship with the state government. The Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society believed that "the public authorities . . . should aid in carrying it into successful operation."³ The legislature provided a room for the organization and made an appropriation for shelving and furniture. The society in turn proposed investigations to be undertaken at state expense.⁴

In 1848 the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society had 102 members who paid an annual fee of one dollar. This number was not sufficient to provide the revenue desired by the organization. Concern was also shown over the fact that additions to the library and cabinet were not so numerous as had been expected.⁵

¹*Annals of the Missouri Historical and Philosophical Society*, I (1848), 9.

²*Ibid.*, p. 7.

³*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴"Memorial on the Subject of a Geological Survey of the State," *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Missouri, at the First Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly . . .*, 1848, Appendix, pp. 180-192.

⁵*Annals . . .*, pp. 4, 6, 27-29.

New Hampshire

NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ON THE THIRD of March, 1823, a literary society in Portsmouth invited eighteen residents of Rockingham and Strafford counties to meet in Exeter on the thirteenth of March to make arrangements for the second centennial of the settlement of the state. After the regular business of the Exeter meeting was finished, those present considered the expediency of establishing a historical society in Concord. The desirability of so doing was apparent to all, and a committee was appointed to invite interested people to attend a meeting for organization on May 20.¹

The New Hampshire Historical Society, according to its constitution, was organized "to discover, procure, and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical history of the United States in general, and of this State in particular." The act of incorporation approved January 13, 1823, recognized this object as one "of public utility" which deserved "public encouragement."²

The constitution of 1823 limited the number of resident members to fifty, and that of 1841 to seventy-five. Historical topics were assigned to members of the society for investigation, and committees were appointed to report annually on a field of interest. In June, 1827, the association presented a memorial to the legislature requesting that copies be procured of New Hampshire colonial documents in Massachusetts; and, in June, 1830, a petition was addressed to Congress praying that copies be ob-

¹"Sketch of the Formation of the New-Hampshire Historical Society," *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society* . . . , I (1824), v-vi.

²*The Act of Incorporation, Constitution, and By-Laws, of the New-Hampshire Historical Society* . . . (Concord: Printed by Jacob B. Moore, 1823), pp. 3, 7.

tained from England of documents illustrative of American history.³

The collections, which contained about fifteen hundred books and many newspapers and pamphlets in 1850, were kept from 1823 to 1837 in the State House. In 1835 the association unsuccessfully sought an appropriation with which to erect a fire-proof building. The historical society moved to the hall of a fraternal organization in 1839 and again in the next year to the Merrimack Bank Building, which the society purchased in 1869.⁴

Six volumes of *Collections* were published by the New Hampshire Historical Society before 1860. Corresponding Secretary John Farmer was a contributor to three volumes and a member of four publication committees. Typical of the papers included are "Constitutions of New Hampshire" and Jacob B. Moore's "Historical Sketch of Concord." Deserving of special mention is Richard Bartlett's "Remarks and Documents Relating to the Preservation and Keeping of the Public Archives." Copies of this report on American public records were sent to the governor of each state and to the President of the United States.

³Nathaniel Bouton, "An Account of the New-Hampshire Historical Society," *Collections of the New-Hampshire Historical Society*, VI (1850), 25.

⁴Joseph Walker, "Dedicatory Address," *Proceedings of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, 1872-3, 1874, pp. 42-43.

New Jersey

NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE NEW JERSEY Historical Society was established at Trenton, January 13, 1845, "to discover, procure and preserve whatever relates to any department of the history of New Jersey, natural, civil, literary or ecclesiastical; and generally of other portions of the United States."¹ Quarterly meetings were held in various towns of the state, and the library in June, 1847, in spite of strong opposition from members in the southern part of New Jersey, was located in the new building of the Newark Library Association.

Judge Joseph C. Hornblower was president of the association from 1845 to 1864, and William A. Whitehead was corresponding secretary from its formation until 1884. The resident membership of 89 on May 7, 1845, increased to 364 in 1851 and fell to 325 in 1857. Of the last number 52 were life members, and 154 had not paid dues for five years. This left but 120 members who paid the annual membership fee of two dollars.²

This historical society undertook numerous activities. It collected a library which numbered 1,318 volumes in 1851 and almost twice the number in 1860. Local committees were appointed to copy the inscriptions on headstones of residents who had died before 1800, and these records from five towns were deposited with the society. A committee on biographies and personal memoirs was created to obtain from distinguished citizens an account of important events in which they had participated. Although all testimony was to be kept in the confi-

¹*Constitution and By-Laws of the New Jersey Historical Society...* (Newark: Press of the Historical Society, 1846), p. 5.

²*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society, 1856-1859*, VIII, No. 2, 51.

dential archives of the society, no important information was obtained.³

In its introductory circular the society expressed the hope that New Jersey would follow the example of New York and Georgia and obtain copies of documents relating to its history in the State Paper Office. A memorial on the subject presented to the legislature was favorably reported February 19, 1846. The resolution was not approved, so the society on May 29, 1847, voted to solicit funds for the preparation of an index to the documents. The amount required was collected by 1850, and Henry Stevens was engaged as compiler. The completed work on 1,800 cards was received in Newark in 1851. In the next year the legislature authorized a subscription of \$500 if the index was published, and this was resolved by the organization on January 11, 1854.⁴

The New Jersey Historical Society published nine volumes of quarterly *Proceedings* between 1847 and 1864. The issues contain lists of donations, extracts from society correspondence, selections from papers read to the members, and copies of valuable manuscripts. Historical works of greater length made up the five volumes of *Collections* printed between 1846 and 1858. Here are a history of East Jersey under the proprietary governments, a study of the provincial courts, a biography of the Earl of Stirling, papers of Governor Lewis Morris, and the Stevens index to colonial documents, which was prepared for the press by Secretary William A. Whitehead.

³*Proceedings . . .*, 1850-1851, V, No. 2, pp. 42-43; and *Proceedings . . .*, 1851-1853, VI, p [67].

⁴W. A. Whitehead, ed., "An Analytical Index to the Colonial Documents of New Jersey . . .," *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society*, V (1858), vi-xxiii.

New Mexico

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

AFTER SEVERAL preliminary meetings, the Historical Society of New Mexico was organized at Santa Fé, December 26, 1859. Colonel John B. Grayson and Surgeon William J. Sloan were chosen president and corresponding secretary respectively.¹ The objects of the association were "the collection and preservation, under its own care and direction, of all historical facts, manuscripts, documents, records and memoirs relating to the history of this country; which are antiquities and curiosities; geological and mineralogical specimens; geographical maps and information; and objects of Natural History."²

During its first year a constitution was adopted and committees were appointed to advance the aims of the society. Its field of interest, the first anniversary speaker pointed out, was "the only important, peopled territory added to our matchless Union" whose history had not been written.³

¹*The Historical Magazine* . . . , IV (March, 1860), 78.

²As quoted in letter of Wm. J. Sloan, Santa Fé, to Rev. E. A. Dalrymple, February 1, 1860. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

³Kirby Benedict, *Anniversary Address Delivered before the Historical Society of New Mexico at Santa Fe, December 31, 1860* . . . (Santa Fé: Manderfield & Tucker, n.d.), p. 8.

New York

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ON NOVEMBER 20, 1804, eleven men, including De Witt Clinton, Rev. Samuel Miller, and John Pintard, met in the city of New York to form a society "to discover, procure, and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical history of the United States in general, and of this State in particular."¹ Judge Egbert Benson was elected president of the society, and John Forbes was chosen librarian. John Pintard, the chief organizer, was named recording secretary.

The society on April 13, 1807, voted to purchase from Pintard his collection of books relating to America, which he was willing to sell at cost. This formed the nucleus of a library which contained 4,265 books and pamphlets in 1813. In that year a catalogue prepared by Dr. Timothy Alden was published, at first separately and later in the second volume of the *Collections*. The publication of the first volume containing the Voyages of Henry Hudson had resulted from the celebration held by the society in 1809 to commemorate the discoveries of the explorer.

The New York legislature passed an act in April, 1814, which appropriated to the society \$12,000 to be obtained by means of a lottery. The association unwisely borrowed against the appropriation before the money was in hand, thereby incurring a debt which amounted to more than fifteen thousand dollars in 1820.² The debt was carried chiefly by John Pintard and Dr. John W. Francis, librarian from 1812 to 1818 and again in 1821. The plight of the society became so serious that offers were accepted for the sale of its library. Assistance came from

¹*The Constitution and Bye-Laws of the New-York Historical Society* (New-York: Printed by T. & J. Swords, 1805), p. 3.

²New York Historical Society, Minutes, October 10, 1820. In manuscript in the library of the New York Historical Society.

the state in April, 1828, when a grant of \$5,000 was accepted on the condition that the society liquidate the remainder of its indebtedness.

The historical society then entered into a period of greatly increased usefulness. A continuation of William Smith's *The History of the Late Province of New York* had been published in 1826, and the complete work was reissued in 1829. In April, 1838, a memorial was presented to the legislature on "the subject of collecting materials in Europe illustrative of the history of New York."³ The proposal was adopted in 1839, and John Romeyn Brodhead was appointed to collect the materials which were printed in the first ten volumes of *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York* and in E. B. O'Callaghan's *The Documentary History of the State of New-York*. Other activities included recommending to the legislature the publication of New York provincial journals, the conduct of lectures, and the celebration of anniversaries of historical events.

Before 1847 the association had occupied six homes, none of which was wholly adequate, but in that year a committee was appointed to obtain fifty thousand dollars for the erection of a suitable, fire-proof building. By 1857 the money had been raised, the building had been completed, and the society had moved into its new quarters.⁴ In the next year provision was made for the establishment of a publication fund of twenty-five thousand dollars, and the collection of the New York Gallery of Fine Arts was transferred to the society. The books in the library, which then contained more than twenty-five thousand volumes, were listed in a catalogue of 653 pages published in 1859. The resident membership which numbered approximately 350 in 1845 had increased to about 1,500 by 1860. The high place obtained by the New York Historical Society in the fifties was recognized by scholars and historians who considered it

³George Folsom, "Historical Sketch of the New-York Historical Society," *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, Second Series, I (1841), 468.

⁴Robert Kelby, *The New York Historical Society, 1804-1904* (New York: Published for the Society, 1905), pp. 48-51.

"the most active & efficient institution of its kind in the country."⁵

RED JACKET HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In the early months of 1844, the Red Jacket Historical Society was organized in Buffalo for the collection of documents relating to the history of the country, the preservation of Indian mementoes and traditions, and the restoration of Indian place names.¹ Alexander J. Sheldon was first president of the association, and William Walker was corresponding secretary.

During its first year the society made "considerable progress, in the collection of historical documents of various kinds, many of which relate to the Red Men of America,"² but six months later its weekly meetings were discontinued. Years afterward former President Sheldon presented to the Buffalo Historical Society a manuscript volume which contains the proceedings and a list of members of the Red Jacket Historical Society.³

NEWBURGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Newburgh Historical Society was organized in February, 1845. At its first meeting, Rev. John Forsyth was elected president, Dr. A. J. Prime secretary, and Dr. M. Stevenson, S. W. Eager, and P. F. Hunn curators.¹ Its meetings were held monthly in summer, and semi-monthly in winter.

The association was active for a few years, and in 1846 it was said to be "in a prosperous condition."² Historical papers

⁵Richard Hildreth, Boston, to James W. Beekman, January 8, 1853. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

¹Red Jacket Historical Society, [*Circular*] (Buffalo: 1844), p. 1.

²William Walker, Buffalo, to George Folsom, April 9, 1845. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

³*The Historical Magazine* . . . , VIII (February, 1864), 86.

¹E. M. Ruttenber, *History of the Town of Newburgh* . . . (Newburgh: E. M. Ruttenber & Co., 1859), p. 257.

²G. C. Monell to the New York Historical Society, April 13, 1846. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the New York Historical Society.

were prepared by members, and a cabinet of manuscripts and minerals was collected. S. W. Eager's *An Outline History of Orange County* was completed partly because its author wished to advance the objects of the organization.³ However, in 1859, according to Ruttenber, the operations of the Newburgh Historical Society had been "suspended for several years."⁴

STATEN ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Staten Island Historical Society met on January 21, 1856, and in August of the same year its certificate of incorporation was approved by the New York Supreme Court. The objects given therein are "to collect and preserve whatever may relate to the History of Staten Island and to establish a Library and Reading Room, and in connection therewith to promote Scientific and other Knowledge by means of Lectures upon Scientific and Literary subjects."¹

There are occasional references to the association in the Staten Island press. An example of such is the announcement in the *Sepoy* for March 8, 1859, of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's lecture, "The Burdens of Society," to be delivered before the society in the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church at Factoryville.² The historian of Staten Island, Ira K. Morris, writes that the society maintained an organization until the sixties and performed a great service to the locality in gathering material for its early history.³

³(Newburgh: S. T. Callahan, 1846-1847), p. 3.

⁴*Loc. cit.*

¹As quoted in William Davis, *History of the Staten Island Historical Society* ([New York:] Published by the Staten Island Historical Society, 1936), p. 4.

²Given in *ibid.*, p. 5.

³*Morris's Memorial History of Staten Island, New York* (New York: Published by the Author [c1900]), II, 487.

ULSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Ulster Historical Society first met in New Paltz on May 10, 1859. A constitution was adopted which gave as the principal object "the collection of a library; cabinet of Natural History; [and] papers relative to history of the original and present county of Ulster . . ." ¹ A. Bruyn Hasbrouck was chosen president, and George W. Pratt was elected secretary of the new organization.

A committee was appointed to secure better care for Ulster County archives, and as a result of its appeal the Board of Supervisors before March 20, 1860, appropriated fifty dollars for the preservation of manuscripts in the clerk's office. ² In October, 1859, it was voted to publish annually a volume of historical papers, and in the following year appeared the first *Collections* of the association.

Annual meetings were to be in Kingston on the sixteenth of October, the anniversary of the burning of the town in 1777, but none was held after the deaths of the president and secretary. In 1880 the collections of the Ulster Historical Society, which according to the constitution were to be delivered to the New York Historical Society after dissolution, were kept by William Lounsbury of Kingston in the hope that the organization would be revived. ³

YATES COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Yates County Historical Society was organized in the village of Penn Yan on February 4, 1860, after a preliminary meeting had been held on January 21. Any resident of the county could become a member by signing the certificate of in-

¹*Collections of the Ulster Historical Society*, I, Part I (1860), 5.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 18-19, 73.

³Nathaniel Sylvester, *History of Ulster County, New York . . .* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), p. 141.

corporation and paying one dollar. Samuel G. Gage was chosen president, John L. Lewis, Jr. recording and corresponding secretary, and several standing committees were named to develop special phases of Yates County history. The by-laws provided for the preparation of a list of settlers, a history of land titles, and other inquiries.¹

Thirty-two members obtained for the society its certificate of incorporation in 1860. Herein the objects of the organization are "the collection and preservation of the facts and materials connected with the history of the early settlement of the several towns in the county of Yates and of the settlers thereof . . ."²

Meetings were held regularly for fifteen or twenty years before the society declined for want of new members. Thereafter meetings became less and less frequent until the corporation was virtually extinct. In 1887 an attempt was made to revive the society under the name of the Pioneer Historical Society of Yates County, but this organization expired within five years.³

ROCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At the first meeting of the Rochester Historical Society on May 18, 1860, Lewis Henry Morgan, "The Father of American Anthropology," was called to the chair. Plans for the society were discussed, and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution to be submitted at the next meeting. At this June meeting Morgan was elected president, and George G. Munger was chosen corresponding secretary.¹

On May 19, 1860, Morgan wrote to Henry O'Reilly requesting him to give to the Rochester society the parts of his collection he did not include in his gift to the New York Historical So-

¹*Certificate of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Yates County Historical Society . . .* ([Penn-Yan: A. D. A. Bridgman, 1860]), p. 7ff.

²*Ibid.*, p. 3.

³Lewis Aldrich, ed., *History of Yates County, N. Y. . . .* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1892), p. 118.

¹*The Historical Magazine . . .*, IV (November, 1860), 337.

ciety in 1859. As a result, 2,940 items collected by O'Reilly were placed in care of the young organization.²

The association elected a large number of members and held several regular meetings. The first annual meeting of the Rochester Historical Society was held in May, 1861, in spite of the fact that several preceding meetings had been neglected because of the approaching war. In the same year through the efforts of Morgan, who then was a member of the Assembly from Monroe County, the legislature passed an act to incorporate the Rochester Historical Society "for the purpose of collecting and preserving historical, genealogical, scientific and literary knowledge, information and mementoes, and books, maps, charts, pamphlets, magazines, papers, and facts in any form having a connection with either of said subjects . . ."³

²Edward Foreman, "Valuable Source Material of History: The Henry O'Reilly Documents . . .," *The Rochester Historical Society, Publication Fund Series*, IX (1930), 125-126.

³New York, Statutes, *Laws of the State of New York, Passed at the Eighty-Fourth Session of the Legislature . . .*, pp. 585-586.

North Carolina

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

EARLY IN 1833 nine incorporators, including Governor David L. Swain, were granted a charter for the North Carolina Historical Society.¹ In 1835 Swain became president of the state university, and under his egis the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina was organized at Chapel Hill in 1844. The association was designed to create public interest which would induce the legislature to obtain from England documents illustrative of Carolina history and “to collect, arrange and preserve at the University” a copy of every book, pamphlet, and newspaper published in North Carolina, all histories of the region, and every record “within the State that may tend to elucidate the history of the American Revolution.”²

A number of historical papers prepared for the society were published. These include the *Introductory Address* . . . delivered on June 5, 1844, by L. Sillman Ives³ and Swain’s “British Invasion of North Carolina, in 1776.”⁴ Other contributions, “especially whatever illustrates the political and social life of North Carolina,”⁵ appeared in the *North Carolina University Magazine*, which President Swain founded in 1852.

¹North Carolina, Statutes, *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, at the Session of 1832-33*, p. 54.

²As quoted in *First Report of the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1845* (Hillsborough: Printed by Dennis Heartt, 1845), p. 3.

³(Raleigh: Printed by T. Loring, 1844), 18 p.

⁴William Cooke, comp., *Revolutionary History of North Carolina, in Three Lectures* . . . (Raleigh: William D. Cooke, 1853), pp. 99-145.

⁵Charles Phillips, Chapel Hill, to the American Antiquarian Society, March 4, 1854. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the American Antiquarian Society.

Principally through Swain's efforts, the Historical Society of the University of North Carolina made a large collection of valuable historical documents. Many of the manuscripts, however, Swain gave to collectors, and at his death the papers of the society were mixed with his own. His widow sold some of the autograph letters but later gave part of the material to the University of North Carolina. Long afterward the remainder of the collection was presented to the North Carolina Historical Commission.⁶

⁶J. G. Hamilton, "The Preservation of North Carolina History," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, IV (January, 1927), 6-7.

Ohio

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF OHIO

AN ACT TO incorporate the Historical Society of Ohio was approved February 1, 1822. Information on organization was sought from at least one eastern historical society before a meeting was held in Columbus in September, 1822. The meeting was well attended but was never called to order, consequently no society was organized.¹

On February 11, 1831, thirty petitioners, including S. P. Hildreth of Marietta and Timothy Flint of Cincinnati, obtained an act of incorporation for a second society to be organized in Columbus. This, the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio established December 31, 1831, had for its object the accumulation of all facts relating to Indians, early settlers, and the political and natural history of the state.² At the annual meetings addresses on the history of Ohio were delivered. Most of these, including William H. Harrison's *Discourse on the Aborigines of the Valley of Ohio* (1839), were printed. A volume of *Transactions*, containing reprints of the addresses and some new papers, was published in two parts in 1838 and 1839. However, the organization did not prosper, and no meetings were held after 1845.³ The books and manuscripts acquired were said to be of small value.

The shortcomings of the society were recognized by its officers before A. Randall, librarian of the Cincinnati Historical Society [*q. v.*], in the winter of 1848-49 proposed a union with

¹Elisha Whittlesey, "Address . . .," *The Fire Lands Pioneer*, I (June, 1858), 14.

²"Journal of the Society," *Transactions of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, I, Part I (1838), iii.

³S. P. Hildreth, Marietta, to Brantz Mayer, May 5, 1847. MS in file of the corresponding secretaries of the Maryland Historical Society.

his organization.⁴ After the proposal was accepted, the collections of the Columbus society were moved to Cincinnati in February, 1849. To preserve the charter, members of the Cincinnati Historical Society were regularly enrolled in the Historical and Philosophical Society, and the library of the former was entered in the records of the latter as a donation.

The Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio located in Cincinnati stated its primary purpose to be "the collection, preservation, and diffusion of whatever may relate to the History, Biography, Literature, Philosophy, and Antiquities of America—more especially of the State of Ohio, of the West, and of the United States."⁵ Most of the new officers had been members of the Cincinnati Historical Society. S. P. Hildreth's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of the Early Pioneer Settlers of Ohio*, which in 1848 had been intended for publication by the Cincinnati Historical Society, appeared under auspices of the Historical and Philosophical Society in 1852. In 1850 its library contained about 1,200 volumes and 2,500 pages of manuscript. During the next decade about one hundred books were added each year.

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF ASHTABULA COUNTY

The Historical and Philosophical Society of Ashtabula County was organized in Jefferson in July, 1838, with R. W. Griswold as president and Arramel H. Fitch as corresponding secretary. In 1850 there were in its library about seven hundred pages of manuscript relating to the early history of the county, northern Ohio, and a large part of the Reserve.¹ Platt R. Spen-

⁴W. H. Venable, "History of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio," *Magazine of Western History*, III (March, 1886), 501.

⁵Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "Constitution," W. D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West* . . . (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 71.

¹Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "A Historical Sketch of the Historical Societies of Ohio," W. D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West* . . . (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 77.

cer, a celebrated penman and for many years recording secretary of the association, did much of the collecting, copying, and arranging of these papers.

A part of the collected manuscripts was published in the *Geneva Times* by its editor, Warren P. Spencer, "who in 1853-4, was the last secretary of the society." In July, 1874, other papers of the dormant Historical and Philosophical Society of Ashtabula County held by Spencer and four associates were placed in the care of the Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society in Cleveland.²

LOGAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

At a gathering of pioneers and residents of the Scioto Valley at Westfall in Pickaway County, July 28, 1841, Judge Corwin of Portsmouth, a pioneer of the preceding century, pointed out that they were assembled near the spot where James Logan, Mingo chief, had delivered his eloquent speech which Jefferson made famous in *Notes, on the State of Virginia*. The old settler proposed that his hearers uncover and resolve themselves into a society determined to preserve the principles Logan advocated by the erection of a monument to his memory and by the preservation of the fragments of Western history. This was done, and the Logan Historical Society was thereupon organized with Felix Renick as president and John S. Williams as recording and corresponding secretary.¹

The plans for the Logan monument were not carried out for lack of funds, but in the preservation of records of Western history the society did important work. A monthly periodical, the *American Pioneer*, was founded by Secretary Williams in January, 1842, to advance the objects of the society and to publish historical documents. The *Pioneer* was referred to as "the

²C. C. Baldwin, *Notice of Historical and Pioneer Societies in Ohio* (Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society Tract No. 27 [1875]), p. 4.

¹*The American Pioneer*, I (January, 1842), 5.

lumber yard of history," for it served as a depository for materials from which history could be written.² For want of patronage Williams was obliged to suspend publication with the issue for October, 1843. The Logan Historical Society also succumbed. Steps were taken in 1850 to revive it, but they were not successful.

MARIETTA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

In 1838 a historical society was projected in Marietta, but it was not organized until November 21, 1841, when Ephraim Cutler and Caleb Emerson were chosen president and corresponding secretary respectively. A circular describing the intention of the Marietta Historical Association to establish a library and cabinet and requesting donations to the same was printed through the courtesy of the Logan Historical Society.¹

The Marietta Historical Association had plans for a publication, but none was issued. One hundred and fifty volumes of old books, a few volumes of newspapers, and a number of manuscripts were collected by the society, but these were scattered after it disbanded about 1850.²

HISTORICAL AND GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NORWALK SEMINARY

In the fall of 1841 the Historical and Geological Society of Norwalk Seminary was established "to collect facts and incidents relating to the early history of Ohio, to advance the science of Geology, particularly as connected with resources of the state, and to establish a cabinet of Indian relics, minerals, shells, and other natural curiosities."¹ A circular address was distributed

²*Ibid*, II (September, 1843), 400.

¹*The American Pioneer*, I (May, 1842), 198.

²Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "A Historical Sketch of the Historical Societies of Ohio," W. D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West* . . . (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 77.

¹*The American Pioneer*, I (August, 1842), 296.

which invited the patrons of the seminary and "the friends of Science generally" to collect and preserve information which would become the material of historians of Ohio.

Under the leadership of President A. Wilson and Secretary H. Dwight the society made a small collection of geological specimens but acquired nothing of value for the historian. The organization was short-lived, for it was stated in 1850 that the society "has long since been suspended."²

CINCINNATI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Cincinnati Historical Society was organized in August, 1844, for "the collection, preservation, and diffusion of Historical, Biographical, and Antiquarian matter; more particularly such as relates to the western country."¹ Within a year three hundred volumes had been collected, and a small volume of *Annals* had been published. James H. Perkins was president of the association from 1844 to 1847. He was succeeded by D. K. Este, who in 1848 was followed by W. D. Gallagher.

In 1848 the Cincinnati Historical Society published S. P. Hildreth's *Pioneer History* as the "first volume of its transactions."² A second volume by Hildreth was to follow if the sale of the *Pioneer History* justified expectations. Before this could be determined, the organization had joined with the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio [*q. v.*], which was moved to Cincinnati in February, 1849.

FIRE LANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Fire Lands Historical Society was organized in Norwalk on May 20, 1857, "to collect and preserve in proper form the

²Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio, "A Historical Sketch of the Historical Societies of Ohio," W. D. Gallagher, *Facts and Conditions of Progress in the North-West* . . . (Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1850), p. 78.

¹"Constitution," *Annals of the Cincinnati Historical Society*, I (1845), 8.

²(Cincinnati: H. W. Derby & Co., 1848), p. iii.

facts constituting the full history of the 'Fire Lands;' also to obtain and preserve an authentic and general statement of their resources and productions, of all kinds."¹ Any resident of the Fire Lands, consisting of Huron, Erie, and part of Ottawa counties, could become a member by signing the constitution and paying twenty-five cents into the treasury. Platt Benedict was first president of the association, and F. D. Parish and G. T. Stewart were named corresponding secretaries.

Lectures were held in the Hall of Whittlesey Academy where the library and cabinet of the association were housed. Large gatherings of pioneers were held in various towns of the region. Hours before a meeting in Milan September 1, 1858, at which Hon. John Sherman was principal speaker, an "army of wagons, carriages and vehicles...literally blockaded the streets."²

In each township in the Fire Lands a committee was appointed to record the facts of the settlement of that district. A circular prepared by the society listed more than fifteen topics which should receive attention in the reports. By the end of 1860, twenty-nine local histories had been printed in the *Fire Lands Pioneer*, a quarterly first issued by the society in June, 1858. It was designed "to preserve in authentic form, all those rich historical materials which would otherwise perish with the memory of the first settlers of this region, who are now rapidly passing away."³ Copies could be had for fifty cents a year, and in 1859 the periodical had more than five hundred subscribers. The *Pioneer* is still published at Norwalk by the Firelands Historical Society.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY

The Historical Society of Cuyahoga County was founded in 1857, but its organization was not completed until February

¹*The Fire Lands Pioneer*, I (June, 1858), 29.

²*Ibid.*, I (November, 1858), 3.

³*Ibid.*, I (June, 1858), 46.

15, 1858. Leonard Case was first president of the society, and John Barr was its first secretary. A vice-president was chosen from each town in the county to serve as chairman of a committee to preserve the local history of his district.

In 1858 and 1860 addresses were delivered to an estimated 5,000 persons at picnics in Newburg. The organization was broken up by the Civil War, and an attempt to revive it in 1870 was unsuccessful. The papers of the society were presented to the Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society, and many of the local histories of Cuyahoga County prepared under its auspices were printed in Cleveland journals.¹

TALLMADGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Tallmadge Historical Society was organized in Summit County on March 24, 1858, with Amos Seward as president and Andrew Fenn as corresponding secretary. Its proceedings occasionally appeared in local newspapers. "A large amount of historical matter" and "235 pages of records" were accumulated before 1875.¹

¹C. C. Baldwin, *Notice of Historical and Pioneer Societies in Ohio* (Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society Tract No. 27 [1875]), p. 8.

¹C. C. Baldwin, *Notice of Historical and Pioneer Societies in Ohio* (Western Reserve and Northern Ohio Historical Society Tract No. 27 [1875]), p. 5.

Pennsylvania

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE NEED for a historical society in Philadelphia had been recognized long before March 17, 1815, when the American Philosophical Society created a Committee of History, Moral Science, and General Literature to collect "Original Documents" and "such other Papers as may be calculated to throw light on the History of the United States, but more particularly of this State . . ." ¹ The committee performed valuable service in the acquisition of records and in publishing, but it was not an integral part of the philosophical society. Moreover, the interests of the committee were limited, because its members had to belong to the older association.

In December, 1824, there was still a place in Philadelphia for a historical association with few restrictions on membership. On the second of that month, Roberts Vaux and six others established the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for "the elucidation of the natural, civil, and literary history of this state." ² Under presidents William Rawle and Peter S. Du Ponceau the organization grew slowly but steadily. Meetings were held in a room of the American Philosophical Society until the historical association rented space for its own use in 1844. The library then contained only 60 volumes, but five years later it had 1,700. By 1857 it had increased to 4,250 volumes.

The Historical Society of Pennsylvania was instrumental in securing the passage of an act requiring registration of births, deaths, and marriages. Committees on ethnology and herald-

¹"Constitution," *Transactions of the Historical & Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society* . . . , I (1819), vii.

²"Constitution of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, I (1826), 6.

ry were established in 1845, and in the following year a collection of gravestone inscriptions was begun. During the administration of President Thomas Sergeant, pilgrimages were made to historic places near Philadelphia to arouse interest in the objects of the association.³

Publishing was a major activity of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The first volume of *Memoirs* was issued in 1826 "with the expectation of being able to issue a work of equal size every six months."⁴ This was not done, but seven volumes appeared before 1861. Included are original papers by George Woods on the history of the University of Pennsylvania and General Braddock's *History of an Expedition against Fort Du Quesne*. From 1845 to 1847 the society published a *Bulletin* containing its proceedings and brief historical papers, and a single volume of *Collections* appeared in 1853. To insure the continuance of this work the society created a publication fund in February, 1854. A subscriber who paid twenty dollars received all publications of the association for the remainder of his life. By 1860, \$15,000 had been received from 750 subscribers.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

In the *Allegheny Democrat* for January 10, 1834, there appeared a notice inviting all interested in the formation of a historical society in Pittsburgh to attend a preliminary meeting the following day. On February 27, 1834, a report was made by a committee on the constitution, and the organization was completed. The name adopted was the Historical Society of Pittsburgh, and its object was "the advancement of knowledge in ancient and modern history, and particularly with regard to the religious, political, civil and natural history of the U. States—."¹

³Hampton Carson, *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1940), I, 247.

⁴*Memoirs* . . . , I (1826), 3.

¹Pittsburgh *Daily Advocate and Advertiser*, March 4, 1834. As quoted in Franklin Holbrook, "Our Historical Society," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, XXI (March, 1938), 6.

Meetings were to be held monthly, and a library was to be established. Benjamin Bakewell was elected president, and Wilson McCandless was chosen secretary. Presumably the society soon declined, for there are no later references to it in journals of the period.

The name Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania was first given to the society organized October 23, 1843. It was composed of those "interested in collecting and preserving materials relating to the early settlement of the Western country." Harmer Denny was chosen president, Benjamin Bakewell, president of the Historical Society of Pittsburgh, was made a vice-president, and Neville B. Craig was elected corresponding secretary. Its collections were destroyed by fire in 1845, and before December, 1847, the organization expired.²

Seventeen men formed the third historical society in Pittsburgh on November 26, 1858, "for the collection and dissemination of information connected with our early history . . ." Wilson McCandless, secretary of the 1834 organization, was named first president; Neville B. Craig, officer in the second society, was elected to a vice-presidency; and Daniel L. Eaton was chosen corresponding secretary. During the next seventeen months the society held twenty meetings. Papers on historical topics were read, and new attention was given to the collection of records. At the last meeting on April 9, 1860, it was reported that a charter had been obtained from the court. An attempt was made to prolong the life of the society by holding meetings quarterly instead of monthly, but this was unsuccessful. The fate of the collection is not known, but two important documents from it are in the library of the present Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.³

WYOMING HISTORICAL AND GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

On February 11, 1858, a number of gentlemen gathered at the Old Fell Tavern in Wilkes-Barre to celebrate the fiftieth an-

²Holbrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

niversary of the first burning of anthracite coal in a grate. There it was resolved to form a historical society "in view of the fact that there are still preserved in our midst many memorials, papers and relics of local and general historical importance..."¹ A committee was appointed to draft a constitution to be presented at the next meeting.

At a meeting on March 11, the name Wyoming Historical and Geological Society was selected, and it was voted to apply to the legislature for a charter "for literary and scientific purposes." After this was obtained the society was fully organized May 10, 1858. Edmund Lovell Dana served as first president of the association, and William Penn Miner was its first corresponding secretary.

The association may have been more interested in geology than in history. Volney Maxwell's two lectures on coal formed the first number of the *Proceedings and Collections* (1858), and the first large gift received by the society contained many scientific specimens.² The collections were kept in a room rented in 1858. It then seemed large enough to accommodate the cabinet for many years, but in 1860 it was "full and overflowing with a great variety of rare and valuable specimens of minerals, shells, coins, Indian relics, &c."³

¹As quoted in O. J. Harvey and E. G. Smith, *A History of Wilkes-Barre* . . . (Wilkes-Barre: 1929), IV, 2025.

²C. B. Johnson, *Sketch of the the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, of Wilkes-Barre* (Reprinted from the *Sunday News-Dealer*, Christmas edition, 1880), p. 5.

³Stewart Pearce, *Annals of Luzerne County* . . ., (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), p. 437.

Rhode Island

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE RHODE ISLAND Historical Society resulted from an accidental meeting of a few gentlemen in Providence on April 19, 1822. After a discussion of certain events in the history of the country, they considered the problem of preserving historical records and finally resolved to form a society for that purpose in Rhode Island.¹ A committee was named to petition the General Assembly for a charter which was granted in June, 1822, and the first meeting was held on the twenty-ninth of that month. James Fenner served as first president of the society until 1833, and John Howland held the office from then until 1854.

The charter was granted "for the purpose of procuring and preserving whatever relates to the topography, antiquities, and natural, civil and ecclesiastical history of this State." It provided that the society should establish two cabinets, one in Newport and another in Providence, and that the annual meeting should be held in the latter city.²

Ninety-five resident members paid the annual fee of three dollars in 1839. A series of public lectures had been conducted in several previous years to increase the revenue of the society, but little money was obtained from this source. The association received \$500 from the state soon after organization and \$75 in 1839 for the copying of documents relating to the history of Rhode Island in the office of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut.

The attention of the society was devoted principally to the acquisition of historical material. The collections made by Vice-President Theodore Foster were purchased after his death, and

¹W. R. Staples, "An Account of the Rhode Island Historical Society," *The American Quarterly Register*, XI (May, 1839), 362-363.

²*Collections of the Rhode-Island Historical Society*, I (1827), 5-6.

every effort was made to complete a file of the *Providence Gazette*. The library of the Rhode Island Historical Society contained about twenty-five hundred volumes in 1850 and perhaps five hundred more in 1857. The Newport cabinet was maintained in the room of the Redwood Library, and the Providence collection was kept with that of the Providence Library Company until after a building for the society was erected in 1844.

Shortly after formation the association discussed the publication of its records. Its first volume of *Collections* appeared in 1827, and four more were published by 1843. Each is devoted to a man or place important in Rhode Island history; for instance, volume one contains a sketch of Roger Williams and a reprint of his *Key into the Language of America*, and in volume five is the 670 page *Annals of the Town of Providence from Its First Settlement* by William R. Staples. No *Collections* were issued from 1843 until 1867. This is explained by John Carter Brown's statement in 1859 that the Rhode Island Historical Society "is and has been for a long time, very dormant."³

NEWPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fourteen men met in Newport on the evening of February 8, 1853, and voted "That it is expedient to form an Historical Society in this town..." At the second meeting a constitution was adopted stating that the Newport Historical Society would "procure and preserve in some suitable place, such manuscripts, histories, anecdotes, essays, books and pamphlets as can be obtained, which relate to the early history of the town and State..."¹ Dr. David King, Robert J. Taylor, and Benjamin B. Howland were elected president, corresponding secretary, and librarian and cabinet keeper respectively.

³*Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* . . . , IV (1859), 35.

¹E. M. Tilley, *The Newport Historical Society in Its Earlier Days* (Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, No. 12 [1914]), p. 3.

Before the directors of the Redwood Library offered the use of their building in 1876, the society had no regular meeting place. This handicapped the early work of the organization, but papers were read at meetings in Newport, and a number of relics were collected. The attendance shortly decreased until it became difficult to obtain a quorum. Sometimes only the president and librarian were present, and the activities of the society were virtually suspended.

Close relationships existed between the Newport Historical Society and the Rhode Island Historical Society. Two of the eleven Newport men active in the formation of the Rhode Island Historical Society became founders of the Newport Historical Society. Twelve other residents of Newport became members of the state organization before 1853, and of these eight participated in the inauguration of the local society.² In 1877 a correspondence was begun which led to the transfer of the southern cabinet of the Rhode Island Historical Society to the custody of the Newport Historical Society.

²M. E. Powel, *Some of Our Founders. Sixty Years Ago* (Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, No. 16 [1915]), p. 2.

South Carolina

SOUTH CAROLINA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE SOUTH CAROLINA Historical Society was preceded in the capital of the state by a special committee of the Charleston Library Society appointed June 11, 1833, to collect "documents relative to the history of South Carolina, and of the United States."¹ The Historical Committee sought out records worthy of preservation and was probably instrumental in obtaining for the library its valuable collection of Revolutionary manuscripts, including letters of Generals Green, Lee, and Washington.

An accidental meeting of several gentlemen at an old homestead near Charleston caused the formation of the South Carolina Historical Society on June 2, 1855. Its objects were "the collection and preservation of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, relics, and other memorials connected especially with the history of South-Carolina, and the diffusion of information obtained by such collections."²

The papers of the Laurens and Pinckney families were among the notable collections which the society acquired in its first years. Attention was drawn to South Carolina material in the Colonial Office in London, and the association, unable to pay an agent for copies, obtained abstracts of the documents. The legislature in 1856 passed an act incorporating the South Carolina Historical Society and a second appropriating \$500 for three successive years for its initial publications.³ The three volumes of *Collections* published in 1857, 1858, and 1859 include *A List and Abstract of Documents Relating to South Carolina, Now Existing in the State Paper Office, London* and the *Journal of the Council of Safety, for the Province of South Carolina, 1775*.

¹Charleston Library Society, Historical Committee, [*Circular*] (Charleston: 1834), p. 1.

²South Carolina Historical Society, [*Circular*] (Charleston: [1855?]), p. 1.

³*Collections of the South-Carolina Historical Society*, I (1857), vi.

Tennessee

TENNESSEE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

JUDGE JOHN HAYWOOD, the "Father of Tennessee History," while collecting materials for the *Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee* and the *Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, brought about the organization of the Tennessee Antiquarian Society at the court house in Nashville on July 1, 1820. The aims of the association have been described as "the collection and preservation of important events in the history of the state of Tennessee, and inquiries into the antiquities of the western country, etc . . ." ¹

Judge Haywood was appointed chairman at the initial meeting of the society and later was elected president. According to the constitution meetings were to be held monthly, but the minute book of the organization shows that they were irregular. The society last met on August 24, 1822. During the two years of their association, the members and correspondents of the Tennessee Antiquarian Society made "many valuable historical contributions" which were utilized by Haywood in the preparation of his two important volumes published in 1823. ²

EAST TENNESSEE HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

The historian J. G. M. Ramsey was a leader in the East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society organized at Knox-

¹John Lea, "History of the Tennessee Historical Society," *The American Historical Magazine*, VI (October, 1901), 355.

John Wooldridge in *History of Nashville, Tenn.* (Nashville: Published for H. W. Crew, 1890), p. 569, gives October 21, 1819, for the date of organization. Lea has been followed because he obtained his information from the "first recorded minutes" of the Tennessee Antiquarian Society.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 354-356.

ville in 1833. Its primary object as expressed by Ramsey was "to invite and preserve contributions" relating to early Tennessee history.¹ Later movements of the society are unrecorded, but it has been described as "fairly active until the advent of the Civil War."² The East Tennessee Historical Society organized in January, 1925, has been considered a revival of this organization.³

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE

In Nashville on May 1, 1849, forty men, chiefly from the professional and business classes of the city, founded the Historical Society of Tennessee "for the collection and preservation of facts, documents and materials, relating to the natural, civil and aboriginal history of the State of Tennessee..."¹ Nathaniel Cross was chosen first president, and John H. Eakins was elected corresponding secretary. At the outset meetings were well attended, but the interest of its members dwindled until the society suspended operations in 1851.²

A reorganization was effected on February 25, 1857, with Col. A. W. Putnam, whose *History of Middle Tennessee*... appeared in 1859, as president and Anson Nelson as recording secretary. The use of a room in the Capitol was expected by the new officers, and they believed it to be the "duty" of the legislature to provide the Historical Society of Tennessee with financial assistance.³ Considerable interest was shown in the work of

¹Address, Delivered before the "East Tennessee Historical and Antiquarian Society," at Its First Annual Meeting in Knoxville, May 5th, 1834 (Knoxville: Printed by F. S. Heiskell, 1834), p. 10.

²Laura Luttrell, "Historical Activities in and respecting Tennessee, 1923-1929," *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 2 [c1930], 94.

³*Ibid.*

¹Tennessee, Statutes, *Acts of the State of Tennessee, Passed at the First Session of the Twenty-Eighth General Assembly, for the Years 1849-50*, p. 366.

²John Lea, "History of the Tennessee Historical Society," *The American Historical Magazine*, VI (October, 1901), 354, 356.

³A. W. Putnam, Nashville, to Lyman C. Draper, February 27, 1857. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

this association. Three or four thousand people gathered to witness the ceremonies on the occasion of the presentation by the Mayor of Nashville of a full-length portrait of his grandfather, Felix Grundy.⁴ Valuable manuscripts were deposited with the society, and numerous additions were made to its cabinet. Within four years, however, political developments intervened, and after September 4, 1860, meetings were again suspended.⁵

⁴John Bright, *An Oration on the Life, Character and Public Services of the Hon. Felix Grundy* . . . (Nashville: John T. S. Fall, 1859), p. 3.

⁵Lea, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

Vermont

VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN ACT TO incorporate the Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society "for the purpose of collecting and preserving materials for the civil and natural history of the State of Vermont" was approved November 5, 1838,¹ but the first meeting in Montpelier was not held until October 15, 1840. Henry Stevens, who had made a large collection of newspapers published during the Revolution, was chosen both president and librarian; and he was authorized to keep the library and cabinet of the society at Barnet, where he resided. Under Stevens' leadership the library increased, but other interests of the organization were neglected. Its failure to publish its investigations was strongly criticized in a speech delivered to the members on October 16, 1846.²

A thorough reorganization was begun in 1858. The name was shortened to Vermont Historical Society, and the provision in the act of incorporation locating the library at Barnet was repealed. A new constitution adopted November 2, 1859, created historical, natural history, and horticultural departments, each under the direction of one of the three vice-presidents. The State House fire in 1857, which had destroyed many papers of the society, obliged the members to exert extra effort to repair the loss. By an act of the legislature in October, 1859, a suitable room in the new State House was provided for the Vermont Historical Society, which then had about 160 resident members.³

¹Vermont, *Statutes, Acts and Resolves Passed by the Legislature of the State of Vermont, at Their October Session, 1838*, p. 76.

²James Butler, *Deficiencies in Our History* . . . (Montpelier: Eastman & Danforth, 1846), pp. 19-20.

³*Constitution and By-Laws of the Vermont Historical Society, with Act of Incorporation, and a Catalogue of Officers and Members* (Woodstock: Davis & Greene, 1860), pp. 3, 9-15.

MIDDLEBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Middlebury Historical Society was organized November 23, 1843, with "the particular object of cultivating New England and American history, and especially that of Addison county."¹ The nine founders chose Hon. Samuel Swift president and Philip Battel secretary; in 1846 Rev. Benjamin Larabee succeeded the former and George S. Swift the latter. The membership increased from time to time, and meetings were held at which papers were read and discussed.

In February, 1847, a plan was adopted to obtain the composition and publication of a history of every town in the county.² A committee was appointed to select and commission the local historians. Some men selected declined assignments, others were unable to complete their work, and no publisher could be found who would print all the histories in one volume. However, worthwhile studies resulted from the program. Samuel Swift's *Statistical and Historical Account of the County of Addison, Vermont* was published as an introduction to the series, which included his *History of the Town of Middlebury . . .* (1859) and John Weeks' *History of Salisbury, Vermont . . .* (1860).

ORLEANS COUNTY NATURAL AND CIVIL HISTORY
SOCIETY

In the weekly *Irasburgh Orleans County Gazette* for May 28, 1853, appeared a call to form a county historical society.¹ In response thereto the Orleans County Natural and Civil History Society was organized on June 6, 1853, "to promote the study of

¹H. P. Smith, ed., *History of Addison County, Vermont . . .* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., Publishers, 1886), p. 121.

²Samuel Swift, *Statistical and Historical Account of the County of Addison, Vermont . . .* (Middlebury: A. H. Copeland, 1859), pp. 5-6.

¹"Proceedings of the Orleans County Natural and Civil History Society," *Proceedings of the Orleans County Historical Society, 1909-1910, 1910*, p. 19.

Natural History, primarily of Orleans County and northern Vermont, and to collect and preserve, while the first settlers of the county are able to furnish them, those items of interest in the civil history of the county, which would otherwise be lost to the future historian."²

Quarterly meetings were held in various towns of the county, but the annual election of officers took place in Derby where the cabinet was kept. According to a resolution adopted March 14, 1854, affiliated "clubs" could be organized in towns where five or more members resided.³ Specimens collected by the clubs were to be deposited in the cabinet of the society.

In 1858 the organization had "in active preparation a complete natural and civil history of the county, including separate histories of each town."⁴ A part, Samuel Sumner's *History of Missisco Valley*, was published in 1860. In March of that year Pliny H. White delivered before the society an address on the early poets of Vermont. It was read again before the Vermont Historical Society on the eighteenth of October and was published by that association sixty years later.⁵

²[*Constitution of the Orleans County Natural & Civil History Society* (West Charleston: 1854)], p. 1.

³*Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴*The Historical Magazine . . .*, II (November, 1858), 329.

⁵*Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society for the Years 1917-1918, 1920*, pp. 93-125.

Virginia

VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE VIRGINIA Historical and Philosophical Society was organized December 29, 1831. Its objects, according to its constitution amended in 1833, were "to discover, procure, and preserve whatever may relate to the natural, civil, and literary history of this State; and to patronize and advance all those sciences which have a direct tendency to promote the best interests of our citizens."¹ Chief Justice Marshall was first president of the association, which had sixty-two members in 1833. An act of incorporation was approved March 10, 1834. Meetings were held with regularity until February 20, 1838, after which the organization became inactive.

A revival of the society was discussed in 1846, and an effort was made to locate it at the University of Virginia.² On February 18, 1847, the association was reorganized in Richmond under the name Virginia Historical Society. A new constitution was adopted, and the membership increased from 252 to 360 within a year. Members not residents of Richmond received society publications without charge to compensate for their inability to use the library. This in 1850 contained the private library of one thousand volumes loaned by William Maxwell and the two hundred volumes and fifty manuscripts acquired by the society.

The Governor recommended public assistance for the Virginia Historical Society in 1850, but the legislature adjourned without acting on the proposal. Five years later the Senate approved an appropriation to the association of \$1,000 for five years, but the bill did not become a law. In 1851 the city of

¹*Collections of the Virginia Historical & Philosophical Society* . . . , I (1833), 7.

²[William Stanard,] "History of the Virginia Historical Society," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXIX, (October, 1931), 301.

Richmond voted the society rooms in the Athenæum and an annual grant of \$150 on the condition, which was accepted, that the collections be open to the public.³ Largely through the efforts of Secretary Maxwell, a permanent fund was established in 1847, to which in 1853 ten members each donated \$100.

The Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society published a volume of *Collections* in 1833. Other papers and its proceedings were published through the courtesy of T. W. White in the *Southern Literary Messenger*.— The reorganized Virginia Historical Society planned a series of "Annals of Virginia," in which each volume was to contain all the important documents of a period in Virginia history.⁴ Conway Robinson's *An Account of Discoveries in the West until 1519* (1848) was the only volume published in the series. The records of this society were printed in the quarterly *Virginia Historical Register* (1848-1853) and its successor, the *Virginia Historical Reporter* (1854-1860).

JEFFERSONVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On August 14, 1851, Dr. H. F. Peery and George Bickley organized a historical society at Jeffersonville, now Tazewell, in one of the most isolated regions of the state. The aim of the association was "to preserve the history of the settlement and Indian wars of the south-western part of Virginia." In less than six months about seventy men, including prominent farmers and civil officials, became members, and a cabinet of specimens of natural history and a library of works useful in historical research were collected.¹

After an adventurous youth, George Bickley, secretary of the organization, began the practice of medicine in Jeffersonville in 1850. His connection with the Jeffersonville Historical Society

³*The Virginia Historical Register* . . . , V (January, 1852), 53.

⁴*Ibid.*, I (January, 1848), 9.

¹G. W. L. Bickley, *History of the Settlement and Indian Wars of Tazewell County, Virginia* . . . (Cincinnati: Morgan & Co., 1852), pp. 129-130.

caused him to write his *History of the Settlement and Indian Wars of Tazewell County, Virginia* . . . and plan a series of volumes on the development of "the whole south-west."² In 1851 Bickley removed to Cincinnati where he became professor in the Eclectic Medical Institute. There Bickley wrote several medical books and assisted in editing the *Eclectic Medical Journal*, but he found time for other activities. He established and edited the short-lived *West American Review*, a literary periodical, and organized the Wayne Circle of the Brotherhood of the Union, an association "to foster a Constitutional Union, perpetuate American history, and dignify labor." Bickley is best remembered for his organization and leadership of the Knights of the Golden Circle, "the instrument by which Mexico was to be Americanized and ultimately annexed, the slavery controversy settled in favor of the South, and his own fame and fortune won." He was not a leader in the anti-war work of the Knights of the Golden Circle in the North during Lincoln's administration, the phase of the movement which has pushed its earlier filibustering activities into the background.³

²*Ibid.*, p. x.

³Ollinger Crenshaw, "The Knights of the Golden Circle. The Career of George Bickley," *The American Historical Review*, XLVII (October, 1941), 23-50, *passim*.

Wisconsin

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

THE ESTABLISHMENT of a historical society in Wisconsin was proposed in the Mineral Point *Democrat* for October 22, 1845, and again the following September in the Milwaukee *Courier*. In response the Madison *Democrat* suggested that such an association be formed during the session of the Constitutional Convention in October. Accordingly, twelve men met in Madison between the fourteenth and twenty-fifth of October, 1846, officers were elected, and Governor James Doty was requested to deliver an address the next year. This he did not do, and at the meeting in January, 1847, M. L. Martin was elected president and chosen to make the discourse in 1848. None was made, and the association dissolved.¹

On January 29, 1849, a preliminary meeting was held to organize a second society. A committee was appointed to draft a constitution, and the secretary was instructed to find a suitable person to deliver the introductory address. The Historical Society of Wisconsin was formally organized January 30, "to preserve the materials for a complete history of Wisconsin embracing the antiquities, and the history of the Indian tribes." Governor Nelson Dewey became first president of this organization, and General William Smith delivered the first address before it on January 15, 1850.²

The aims of the association did not receive serious attention until after Lyman Draper became a member on January 19, 1853. In less than two months the State Historical Society of

¹Lyman Draper, "Origin of the Society," *Addresses of Hon. I. A. Lapham, LL.D., and Hon. Edward Salomon . . .* (Madison: W. J. Park, 1866), pp. 22-27.

²"Early Records of the Society, 1849-54," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, I (1903), xxx-xl.

Wisconsin was incorporated "to collect, embody, arrange and preserve in authentic form, a library of . . . materials illustrative of the history of the state; to rescue from oblivion the memory of its early pioneers, . . . and to diffuse and publish information relating to the description and history of the state."³ A new constitution was adopted January 18, 1854, and several months later an annual appropriation of \$500 was voted to the society by the Wisconsin legislature.

With this financial assistance, soon increased to \$1,000 a year, Draper, who became corresponding secretary January 18, 1854, began his splendid work of acquiring historical records for the association. In 1856 the Wisconsin historical society spent more for books than did any similar organization in the country. In addition, many important gifts came to the library, which had just 50 volumes in 1854 and more than 14,500 seven years later.⁴ Three years after he became an officer of the association, Draper could point out that few American historical societies possessed larger collections and none had enjoyed more rapid growth.

Under Lyman Draper's supervision not only the library flourished. Both a gallery of portraits and a publishing program were inaugurated in 1855. Previously reports of proceedings had appeared in Madison journals, and three addresses delivered to the members had been separately printed, but now was to be published a series of *Reports and Collections*, of which four volumes appeared before 1860. Therein are transcripts from manuscript, town histories, pioneer recollections, and brief communications on place names and local lore. The achievements of the young State Historical Society of Wisconsin were widely recognized. One leading historian observed: "During the time since it was founded, it seems to have done more than any similar Society in the country. It has set an example of enterprise and activity, which any Society may be proud to follow."⁵

³Wisconsin, Statutes, *General Acts Passed by the Legislature of Wisconsin, in the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Three . . .*, pp. 15-16.

⁴*Report and Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin . . .*, V (1868), 26.

⁵Jared Sparks, Cambridge, to Lyman C. Draper, June 8, 1857. MS in the correspondence of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Sources

The growth of American historical societies, like the development of most of our cultural institutions, has received little attention from students and scholars. The history of only one society has been told at length, and that work, Hampton Carson's *A History of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, has many shortcomings. Several aspects of the general development of the institutions have been considered by Henry Bourne, Julian P. Boyd, Worthington C. Ford, Dixon Ryan Fox, Evarts B. Greene, J. Franklin Jameson, and others, but none of their articles is designed to include a large number of the associations or many of their varied activities.

The principal sources for this study have been the publications of the societies and the extensive files of the corresponding secretaries of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New York Historical Society, the American Antiquarian Society, the Maryland Historical Society, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Printed works and manuscripts which contain important information about early American historical societies are described in the footnotes, but no bibliography is appended because the titles of most of the publications consulted are included in A. P. C. Griffin's excellent *Bibliography of American Historical Societies*, last published in 1907. This omission should cause little inconvenience, because the plan of the book makes it possible to find references to both subjects and societies.

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